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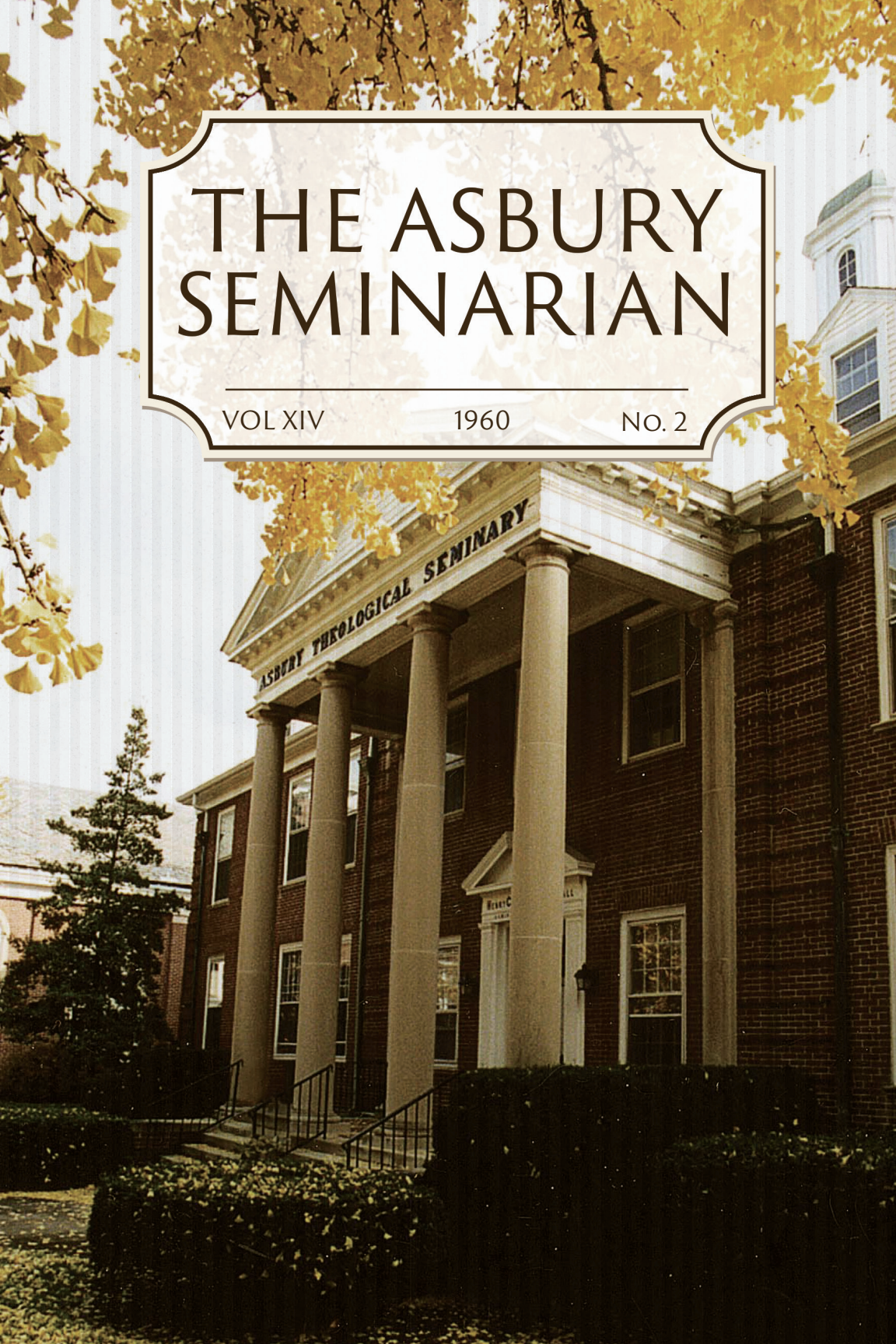

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The Wesleyan Message In The Life And Thought Of Today

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Editorial . . .

Christian Unity - Why? What? How?

Howard F. Shipps

Is it not important that one of our earliest considerations of unity be concerned with its purpose? Why seek it? Why be concerned when it seems to be lacking in certain areas of the Christian community? Why be disturbed about the failures which may be produced because of its partial absence in the universal Christian community? Briefly, why is genuine Christian unity so essential to the life of the Christian, individually and collectively? What then, in other words, is the real function of unity for the Church?

The primary purpose of unity as expressed in the high priestly prayer of Jesus is to bear witness to an unbelieving world, "That they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Paul speaks of the purpose of unity as enabling the whole Church to perform its normal divine responsibility with effectiveness. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles" (I Cor. 12:12, 13). Further, Paul speaks about the universal Christian community as constituting the building of God. (See I Cor. 3:9.) The figure of a building is of very practical significance and sets forth a number of implications. A building which is worthy of the name implies a capable architect. The building of God therefore will show forth the nature of God which is holiness, beauty, and strength. A building will also serve that purpose for which it was designed. In God's building the togetherness and co ordination of the Church are dependent upon the unity thereof. With somewhat the same figure of speech Paul instructs the Church at Ephesus (Eph. 2:21) concerning the necessity of unity. By such unity within the Church the Christian community is to "grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." Thus it is suggested that the purpose of our unity is to provide a suitable dwelling place for the living God. Our unity is required in order that we may provide an

adequate Christian witness. In us who are united, that building which is fitly framed together becomes the medium through which the glory of God is revealed.

Visser 't Hooft suggests in his recent book on the subject, *The Pressure of Our Common Calling*, that there are three purposes of Christian unity, namely, Witness, Service, and Fellowship. While we must recognize the place and importance of all three and of their vital relationship to the unity of the Church, yet we would suggest that the witness of the Christian community is the ultimate evidence of its essential unity.

Let us now consider the question *What?* What is this primary and essential unity for which Jesus prays, and which Paul implies must be a fundamental part of the redeemed life of the Christian community? Visser 't Hooft holds that there are four different meanings of unity: 1) The given unity of the common calling; 2) The growing unity in fulfilling the common calling; 3) The churchly unity in faith and order; and 4) The ultimate unity in Christ.[1] Our concern for the present will be with the first and second of these.

There is a unity among Christian believers which is an inherent part of the redemptive work of God. At the moment of one's passing from death unto life and becoming a child of God by faith in His Word, he is given a sense of kinship and unity with every other believing child of God. We speak of this as the unity of the Spirit. As the Scripture has said, we are made not only one *with* Christ, but also one *in* Christ. That is to say, our new relationship with Christ immediately puts us in a new relationship with all others who have thus believed in Him. This is the Christian unity which inheres in our initial salvation.

The assertion of this unity was made by the Edinburgh Conference of 1937 in its affirmation of unity.[2]

> This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, who lived, died and rose again to bring us to the Father, and who through the Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we

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[1] W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Pressure of Our Common Calling* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 87.

[2] Leonard Hodgson, *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order* (Edinburgh, 1937), p. 275.

are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and called by Him to witness in all the world to His glorious gospel. Our unity is of heart and spirit.

Further then, if unity be an inherent part of the grace of God bestowed upon the believer at the time of initial salvation, we must recognize that it has the potential of growth and expansion. As we grow in grace, so may we also grow in unity. The child of God must recognize that he has a definite and personal responsibility for this. No doubt much of the Church's disunity has resulted from the fact that Christians have too often been too little concerned about their need for normal fruitful development in the grace of Christian unity. As a result of this indifference the total witness to the world has suffered as well as the larger fellowship within the Church having been much diminished. Let this be a serious concern therefore on the part of all believers that each one's responsibility to God and man will be joyfully assumed and that each will be growing in the spirit of unity.

Finally let us suggest the question *How*? There may be a relative perfection of unity just as there is a relative perfection of grace or love. Visser 't Hooft contends that unity at its best is "a total identification of our wills with the will of God."[3] The clear implication here is that the perfection of unity is dependent upon the perfection of grace. Our Lord prays that His disciples "may be perfected into one" (John 17:23).

In the chapters of John immediately preceding the seventeenth the message of Jesus is primarily, and in a sense exclusively, to His Church. Through chapter twelve John has given the record of those things which were done by Jesus before the eyes of the world. Beginning with chapter thirteen there is an exclusion of the world, and here Christ delivers His great message to the Church. One of the majors of this message is Christ's teaching concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church after Christ shall have returned to the Father. It is from Christ and through the leadership of the Holy Spirit that our unity is to be preserved. Jesus teaches the Church in chapters fourteen through sixteen concerning the six-fold ministry of the Spirit: 1) He will abide in the believer as the Spirit of truth (14:16); 2) He will teach the believer all things (14:26); 3) He will testify of Christ (15:26); 4) He, through

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[3]Visser 't Hooft, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-84.

the believer will convince the world of sin (16:8); 5) He will guide the believer into all truth (13); and 6) In and through the believer He will glorify Christ (14).

Here is the divine foundation for initial and progressive unity within the Christian movement. Jesus in His teaching in these four chapters prepared the way and laid the foundation upon which the life of the Church was to be established. Among other things thus provided for the Church through the ministry of the Spirit was its essential unity. Jesus has taught the Church one of its major lessons. How well has it been learned? Having taught this great lesson, He then kneels before the Father in an anguish of spirit and prays that the work which He has come into the world to make possible shall be completed by those followers of His to whom He has committed this sacred trust. How well has His prayer been answered?

John Wesley's Concept of the Church

Reginald Kissack

Few theological issues today are more alive than those which concern the nature of the Christian Church. If one could superimpose the various notions of the various churches, the first impression would be surprise at the extent of the area common to all, and the next greater perplexity at the tenacity with which each upholds the importance of its particular margin. Yet even here the gradations of difference would follow a fairly simple pattern of development. The "right-wing" "Catholic" concepts shade through the older Reformation churches into the "independent" churches, following a fairly regular historical development, with Quakers and the Salvation Army, despite their rejection of sacramental ideas, and the very name of Church, seen to be quite clearly a part of the system for all that are at the extreme left.

It would be seen that by far the greatest controversy turns on the concept of ministry, with only slightly less dispute about the relation of Scriptures to the Church. Towards the left of the scale, spirit of Christ rather than body of Christ seems to define the relation of the Church to its Lord; accordingly the sacramental notion fades away. Whereas all parts of the scale regard holiness as an essential element, there are many different notions about what it consists in. On the right it seems to be a sacramental right relationship with the institution of the Church; it shades through ideas that equate it with right doctrine, into a personal standard of outward behavior. Not unrelated is a sociological divergence between the mainly right-wing idea of the "multitudinous" Church, stemming ultimately from the Constantinian notion of an *Una Sancta* coextensive with a world empire, and the "gathered" Church of the left, whose pattern is the "little flock." The right is impressed by institutional perpetuity, the left distrusts human nature, and consequently seeks increasing freedom from institutions. For just this reason even Calvin rejected the need of apostolical continuity.

Where are we to locate the specifically Methodist concept of the Church, and in particular, what were John Wesley's own ideas?

Wesley was brought up to hold ecclesiological ideas which would have set him at the extreme Catholic wing of the Anglican Church, believing, as he puts it, "that none but members of the Anglican community were in a state of salvation." These ideas, he writes in a passage that dates within two years of his death, began "to abate of their violence" about 1729, that is, at the time when the Holy Club first came into existence at Oxford. Throughout all his life they continued to modify, although certain elements remained impervious, seemingly, to outside influence.

In tracing this process, it is convenient to divide Wesley's life into four periods. The first of these lasts from 1729 to 1744. It covers the formative period of Wesley's general ideas. The second corresponds to the formulation of Methodism in terms of a Church, a problem that occupied the chief place at Wesley's earliest annual conferences. The third emerges out of the second about 1750 and marks the tensions raised when these ecclesiological notions came into conflict with contemporary Anglican and Dissenting theories. The last period is clearly defined between 1769 and 1784 and shows Wesley accepting at last the responsibility of giving Methodism an organization that would outlast his own time.

The natural focus of the first period was Wesley's personal spiritual crisis of May 24, 1738, when he experienced the assurance of God's gracious pardon of his sins. But he had two other crises (of a different nature) in the period that profoundly influenced his ideas of the Church. Together with his brother, he found that these initial experiences of God's grace towards them were accompanied by the inescapable urge to preach the possibility of this same thing to all men. This led directly to open-air preaching. John Wesley first did this on April 2, 1739. Immediately the success of his work presented him with the problem of how to provide a pastoral organization to stablish, strengthen and settle his converts. The other crisis was more directly ecclesiological. Wesley's contacts with the Moravian missionaries in England and America led not only to his religious crisis and its solution, but also to his being used by them as an envoy in their negotiations for recognition

with the Church of England. Thus Wesley had a unique opportunity to study the theory of a non-Anglican Church pattern on the one hand, at precisely the same time as he was experiencing in practice the defects of the Established pattern in the face of an evangelical revival on the other. Wesley came out strongly critical of the Moravian pattern, especially of the way its episcopacy functioned (or rather failed to function), even though they possessed an impeccable Apostolic Succession.[1] No shred of Moravian ecclesiology was ever given a place in Methodism. Both Wesley and his brother were very soon in conflict with the Church of England authorities over the question of preaching in another man's parish; since the Wesleys were Fellows of university colleges, they had, in the nature of the case, no parish of their own. Wesley, if he were to have any parish, had to "look on all the world as my parish." Accordingly, if a bishop forbade him to preach in parishes where there was already a minister, Wesley must either admit himself effectively silenced or disobey the bishop. He formulated the issue: "Is it just to obey Man rather than God?" He cited Anglican divines who had enunciated the rule in face of the issues posed by the Reformation: "Though it be lawful to obey Man for God's sake, it is not lawful to disobey God for Man's sake." As he put it: "To obey God, I have both an ordinary and an extraordinary call. My ordinary call is: Take thou authority to preach the Word of God. My extraordinary call is witnessed by the works God doeth by my ministry, which prove that He is with me of a truth in the exercise of my office." It is useful to note here, *apropos* of Wesley's controversy with the bishops at this early stage of his work, that one of the remarkable features of Methodism is the strange tolerance showed on the whole by episcopal authority to Wesley. Never once do bishops do more than protest and rebuke him. Opposition, and at times the bitterest persecution, came usually from the parish clergy allied with the local magistrates or, more often, with a bigoted mob.

Five years of the Revival brought Wesley face to face with the ecclesiological problems of organizing his preachers and their converts. The parish clergy were not capable of caring for the souls awakened under Methodist preaching. The first

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1 *Letters*, I, "To Hernnhutt," August 8, 1740, p. 349.

formal steps in this direction were the calling of annual conferences, first of those Anglican and ordained clergy that worked with the Wesleys, and later of the lay preachers whom they employed. The extent to which, all unknowing, they had become a Church already, is shown by the type of question they had to answer. The Conference of 1745 deliberated thus on the question:

> Question: Is Episcopal, Presbyterian or Independent Church government most agreeable to reason?
> Answer: The plain origin of Church government seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the gospel. They then desire him to watch over them, to build them up in the faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness. Here, then, is an independent congregation, subject to no pastor but their own, neither liable to be controlled in things spiritual by any other man or body of men whatsoever.
>
> But soon after some from other parts, who are occasionally present when he speaks in the name of Him who sent him, beseech him to come over and help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God he complies, yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their advice appointed one who has gifts and grace to watch over the flock till his return.
>
> If it pleases God to raise another flock in the new place, before he leaves them he does the same thing, appointing one whom God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by his word he appoints one in his absence to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the ability that God giveth. These are Deacons, or servants of the Church, and look on their first pastor as their common father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls.

The congregations are not strictly independent. They depend on one pastor, though not on each other. As these congregations increase, and the Deacons

> grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate deacons or helpers, in respect of whom they may be called Presbyters or Elders, as their Father in the Lord may be called the Bishop or Overseer of them all.
>
> Q. Is mutual consent absolutely necessary between the Pastor and his Flock?
>
> A. No question. I cannot guide any soul unless he consents to be guided by me. Neither can any soul force me to guide him if I consent not.
>
> Q. Does the ceasing of this consent on either side dissolve the relation?
>
> A. It must in the nature of things. If a man no longer consent to be guided by me, I am no longer his guide. I am free. If one will not guide me any longer, I am free to seek one who will...."[2]

The Conference of 1747 asked: "Are the three orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons plainly scriptural?" The answer is: "We think they are...but we are not assured that God ordained that the same plan should obtain through the ages."[3] There is no such determined scheme in the New Testament, nor was there any thought of uniformity of government before Constantine's time; "such an idea would not have been, had men consulted Scripture only." These questions were asked in a context which implied a radical criticism of the contemporary notions of the meaning of the word "Church." As yet nothing positive and distinctive is affirmed, but there are indications of a steadily hardening conception of the Church which will not coincide with any of the positions we have previously plotted on our scale. In this period the controversy is mainly addressed to the National Anglican Church, within whose framework Wesley was always consistently determined to keep his work in England, but the Dissenting "independent" churches are also in view, chiefly as a pattern into which at all costs Methodism must not be allowed to slide.

The area of controversy is still centered almost entirely on the question of ministry. The area is larger than in the first period, for the question is no longer the "itineracy" of ordained Anglican clergy into others' parishes, but the appearance

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[2]John Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societie* ,p. 261.
[3]*Ibid.* ,*John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* ,p. 37.

of a rival ministry, some who reside, and others who also "itinerate," none of whom were ordained. The issue is further complicated by the relationships between the Methodist people and the Anglican parish clergy. These relationships were often determined by the lack of holiness, or the lack of testimony to any sort of divine vocation, in the parish clergy, at least in the judgment of the Methodist people.[4] It is a crisis arising from Wesley's concern that the "pure word" should be preached and heard universally. The result is the appearance of one or two principles that belong not to the Anglican, but rather to the Dissenting, end of the scale. These become fundamental to the Methodist concept of Church. One is the sovereign right of conscience, if needs be to overrule a bishop, or indeed any of the "non-essential" ordinances of the Church.[5] (Wesley held that doctrine and worship alone were obligatory.) Another was the necessity of "mutual consent" between pastor and flock. "No man living, neither King nor Parliament, has the right to prescribe what Pastor I shall use."[6] This is a clear restatement of the seventeenth century independent notion of "willingness." It is a principle that cuts clean across the notion of the parochial ministry of an Established Church, and runs somewhat counter to Reformed Church ideas.

The loosening up of Wesley's ideas in this period was helped by his reading of two books, both the products of the religious situation in England in the seventeenth century. One was Lord King's *Primitive Church* . This had been written in the more ecumenically-minded years at the end of the century, as a contribution to the movement for "comprehending" the Presbyterians and Dissenters. The other, Stillingfleet's *Irenicon* , dated from the more difficult polemical period of the Commonwealth, when it represented a last attempt to avoid the tragic and vindictive situation of 1661. By King, Wesley was convinced "that Bishops and Presbyters are essentially of one order... and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent of all others."[7] From Stillingfleet he learned

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4 *Cf.* *Letters* , Vol. III, "To Charles Wesley," June 20, 1755, p. 131.

5 *Cf.* Wesley's *Works* (5th. ed.), Vol. VIII, p. 280, and Simon, *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* , p. 37.

6 *Cf.* Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* , p. 261.

7 *Letters* , III, "To James Clarke," July 3, 1756, p. 182.

"that neither Christ nor his Apostles prescribed any particular form of Church Government, and that the plea for the divine right of Episcopacy was never heard in the Primitive Church."[8]

The third period emerges out of the second; its differentia being that now Wesley faces, often reluctantly, the inferences of the definitions of the Church made in the earlier period. The period was under the shadow of the word "Separation," and its characteristics were the pressure put on Wesley to renounce his obstinate loyalty to the Church of England, and his resistent determination that his own ministry, and all ministry dependent on him (which was his conception of what Methodism constitutionally was), should remain inside the National Church. From one side his brother Charles, always more loyal to the Church of England than he himself, was pressing him to restrain the growing tendency of the unordained preachers to behave exactly like dissenting ministers, and in particular to stop them from administering the sacraments. On the other side, Wesley had to defend the pattern of Methodist ecclesiastical activities against the complaints of parish ministers. The official Church of England rubric had five "irregularities" to charge against Methodism: "Preaching abroad," extemporary prayer, the formation of religious societies, the "Permitting" of unordained clergy, and itineracy. On the opposite side, Wesley tells his fellow clergy that his preachers embarrass him when they charge certain things against Anglicanism, to which he has no defense. The authority of Anglican Canons and their "spiritual courts" he can put among the non-obligatory elements of their system. When, however, he questions the lawfulness of the very ministry of a clergyman who does not believe he is called of God, or expresses sympathy with the general Methodist dissatisfaction of the Anglican liturgy, he is being pushed into that area of "doctrine and worship" in which he had previously felt loyalty was essential. It is against this background that he said firmly that the Methodist service must always be regarded as a supplement to the worship of the parish church;[9] used as a substitute it was highly defective. When Wesley launched American Methodism on its own ecclesiastical existence, he gave it not only orders but also a liturgy. The criticism of the fitness of Anglican clergy led to the rigidity of the tests evolved

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8 *Journal*, January 20, 1746.

9 Smith, *History of Methodism* (4th. ed.), Vol. I, p. 332.

in these years for Methodist preachers. In most Reformed Churches sound learning had become the substitute for Apostolic Succession. For the Methodists this was not enough. These tests were prescribed:

1. Do they know in whom they have believed? Have they the love of God in their hearts? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? Are they holy in heart and in all manner of conversation?
2. Have they *gifts*, as well as *grace*, for the work? Have they in some tolerable degree a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of the *Salvation by Faith*? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?
3. Have they success? Do they not only so speak as generally either to convince or affect the hearts? But have any received remission of sins by their preaching? a clear and lasting sense of the love of God? As long as these three marks undeniably occur in any, we allow him to be called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient reasonable evidence that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost.

The most critical feature of the period was the way it ended Wesley's hopes of setting Methodism under the guidance of a conference of evangelically minded ordained clergy, and so retaining it securely inside the Church of England. Thus it might have been a "Society" in the sense of an order of like-feeling Christians, and not a "Society" in Hooker's sense of a branch of the Church Catholic organized autonomously. In 1764, Wesley dispatched a letter, usually called the' "*Scarborough Irenicon*," to all the Anglican clergy whom he felt still sympathized with him. It was an invitation to form a "close union" between Methodists and parish clergy. This would mean that they would refrain from mutual hindrances by refusing to criticize and disparage each other; that they would love as brethren; that they should defend and help each other, "to rob the poor blind world of its sport: O they cannot agree among themselves!"[10] Hardly any replies at all were received.

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[10] I *Letters*, IV, "To Various Clergymen," April 19, 1764, pp. 237, 238.

Wesley felt this shortage of ordained clergy in a practical way. It meant that the Methodists could not have frequent celebrations of Holy Communion. The Anglican service, which has always been used by the Methodists, is one of the better pieces of the Church of England worship, reflecting the Reformation concern to give high prominence to the saving work of Christ. Wesley called it "a converting ordinance"; it was both Word and Sacrament. To escape this embarrassment Wesley once went as far as to allow a Greek bishop, Erasmus, to ordain a medical doctor, so as to help him.[11] Nevertheless he objected to any of his Methodist preachers obtaining ordination this way, on the curious grounds that they lacked the necessary education.[12] Thus "sound learning" was not entirely eliminated from his ideas of ministry, and it should be stressed that he expected all his preachers to study several hours a day.[13] But Wesley was a son of his century; there was a general feeling abroad that a university education was essential for ordination. Other evidences of Wesley's unwillingness to live out the implications of the concept of the Church as evolved in Methodism, were his insistences in 1763 that the word "church" be never used of Methodism, and that no preacher call himself a minister.[14]

From this it will be seen that the key issue of the period was the ministerial office--could limits be set upon the activities of Methodist preachers, or must they be recognized as ministers in some Reformation sense? The Wesleys withstood the strongly flowing tide, determined to avoid becoming just another Dissenting denomination. But in 1769 John announced two matters to the Conference. The one was his disappointment at the failure of his *Scarborough Irenicon*; the other, his intention to build a Methodist organization that should outlast his life, based not on a caucus of sympathetic ordained clergy, but on a conference of his own preachers.[15]

The working out of this forms the theme of the fourth and last period. It is an irony of history that, in view of the part

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11 *Ibid.*, "To St. James' Chronicle," Feb. 2, 1765, p. 289.
12 *Ibid.*
13 *Works*, Vol. VIII, pp. 314, 315.
14 J. W. Simon, *Master Builder*, p. 141.
15 *Cf. Letters*, V, "To Travelling Preachers," August 1, 1769, p. 143.

that the care of Methodists in America after the War of Independence was to play in the final solution of the question, 1769 was the year when preachers were first officially designated for America. The very first Conference these preachers held in America in 1773 called attention to the vital need of authority for these men to administer the sacraments there. Wesley was still adamant. During the War of Independence some preachers at one Conference ordained each other, but the next year annulled the proceedings under the pressure of Francis Asbury, their General Superintendent. Only in 1784 did Wesley act, and acted in the end remarkably suddenly. He ordained two of his preachers as Presbyters, and set apart Thomas Coke, already an ordained Anglican minister, as Joint Superintendent of the work in America, with instructions to set apart Asbury in the same office. These sentences from the documents connected with these acts explain Wesley's intentions:

> Whereas many of the People of the Southern Provinces of North America who desire to continue under my care and still adhere to the Doctrines and Discipline of the Church of England are greatly distrest for want of Ministers to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper....I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the Ministry in America....
>
> Lord King's account of the Primitive Church convinced me that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain....For many years I have been importuned to exercise this right...but I have steadily refused, because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the National Church to which I belonged....
>
> But the case is wholly different between England and America....
>
> The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical....
>
> As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive

Church.

Asbury consented to being "set apart" only when the American Conference approved it, but he accepted the title of Bishop, rather than Superintendent, because it was felt to be a more scriptural word. The word "Church" was also adopted at once. Thus the Methodist Episcopal Church began its life.

In the nature of the case Wesley had to proceed differently in England. The same year saw him form his Conference of Preachers, promised in 1769. He nominated one hundred of them to act in his place, with of course this difference. He had had an ecclesiastical standing in the Church of England. The legal body that succeeded him had no connection with that church, and only a juridical relationship to the state. A nineteenth century churchman once said: "The Conference is the living Wesley."[16] British Methodism has always had its conference as its source of authority, although the composition of it has been modified from time to time.

There are evidences that the Conference of One Hundred Preachers, which was an idea slightly older than the Methodist Episcopal Church, may not after all have represented Wesley's final idea for the future shape of Methodism in Britain. He seems to have inclined in his last years, perhaps at the suggestion of Dr. Coke, to the notion of a British counterpart to the American church. He left at least three men whom he had set apart as superintendents, and who might have inaugurated such a succession had it been required. In any event, however, after Wesley's death in 1791, the Conference rejected the idea both of an episcopally-governed church, and even the practice of ordination by the imposition of hands, except in the case of preachers for overseas. The practice was only used generally after 1836.

It remains now to crystallize the concept that emerges from the tensions of this half-century. Wesley's thinking pivoted on what he could discover of Bible teaching and primitive practice. His favorite Bible passage for inspiration about the Church was Ephesians 4. Preaching on this theme in 1788, he defines the Church as "All the persons in the Universe sic whom God hath so called out of the world...as to be "one body united by one spirit; having one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God

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16Jabez Bunting, quoted B. Gregory in *Sidelights on Conflicts of Methodism* , P. 505.

and Father of all."[17] This, he says, is enough; there is no need to add, as the Anglican Article does, anything about preaching the Word or administering the sacraments. Another pregnant saying is found in his *Notes* on Acts 5:11: "Here is a native specimen of a New Testament Church; which is, a company of men, called by the Gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kind of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira."[18]

On this material he brought two essential Anglican principles to bear. The first was the conviction that a visible church should show a unity co-extensive with the normal social and political unit in which it was set. It should be a national church, at least in England. In this respect Wesley was perhaps more loyal for sociological than for theological reasons. At all events, he did not hesitate to enter the American field in rivalry with the Church of England. Secondly, he never wavered in his belief that episcopacy was the best type of church government. Even when Stillingfleet had convinced him that the Apostolic Succession was a fable and that episcopacy could boast neither divine right nor divine once-for-all ordinance, he still upheld it on pragmatic grounds. For America he changed the name *bishop* to *superintendent*; *consecrate* to *set apart*, but he retained the substance.

The effect of this is a type of ecclesiology that tries to combine elements of both the Independent and the Catholic extremes. This type is first described in a practical and functional way in the *Minutes* of the 1745 Conference. There is at least the germ of Wesley's distinctive ideas. Three features may be noted.

First, it is seen that the Church cannot be defined exhaustively in terms of the three traditionally mutually exclusive categories of church government--Episcopal, Presbyterian or Independent.

Secondly, like the Baptist and Independent theology of the seventeenth century, Wesley's thought recognizes that the preaching of the pure word is the formative element of a local church. The Church is a phenomenon that occurs where the Word of God is proclaimed purely.

Thirdly, it also recognizes, unlike these, that the preaching

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[17]Wesley, Sermon, LXXIV, "Of the Church," I, 14.
[18]Wesley, *Notes on the New Testament*, *Loc. cit.*

of the pure word implies the priority of a preacher, whose ministry is however envisaged, not as a static figure as in the Reformed pattern, but as an itinerating, missionary figure.

The effect is to focus on the idea of "Connexion"[19] as the distinctive Methodist feature. The minister is the connection between the different churches; these depend on him. Thus Wesley resolves the tension between the classic opposing ideas of Church--on the one hand the Catholic, *Una Sancta*, idea; on the other the Independent, Little Flock concept. The Independent notion of unity was of an association of equal sister churches, a concept obviously difficult to realize in practice. For the Catholic, unity was no problem; it radiates from the center through an apostolic ministry. The Wesleyan idea was in between the extremes. The ministry provides the unity, be it the ministry of Wesley himself, or be it the Methodist ministers of today. Neither he nor they belong to any one local church. Their ministry is shared by all. The itinerant system thus is the symbol not only of an evangelical ministry deriving in idea from the missionary journeys of the Apostles, but it also signifies that no minister belongs to a local church. It rather represents the connection between that church and the whole Church.

We may therefore conclude with the following composite statement of the concept of the Church as it was developed under John Wesley:

The Church is identifiable throughout the world as the company of those who believe the Gospel proclaimed by God in Jesus Christ. This invisible, universal Church becomes visible under the form of different "Societies," each of whom has its own organization determined according to its situation in place and time. For Wesley's own situation, the best organization was of one episcopally-governed church for each national grouping, negotiating its own relationships with the civil government.

A church is called into local existence by the preaching and the believing of the pure Gospel. The outward mark of a church is holiness, which in its members is the evidence of its life and vigor. While the preaching of the Word and the adminis-

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19"Connexion" and its derivatives are nineteenth-century words, not found in Wesley, who used instead phrases such as "depend," or "general union of our Societies."

tration of the sacraments are the forms in which a church manifests its community life, the substance of its common life is fellowship, i.e., the possession of the spirit described in Ephesians 4. As all members share in this, they share responsibility for the function of the Church. Thus in one sense, the ministry is secondary to the Church itself, insofar as the local church is itself a corporate ministry (as in the Baptist pattern). From another point of view, however, the ministry is essential to the Church, insofar as it connects and unifies the independent local churches.

This triple aspect in the life of a church, i.e., its prime dependence on God through his Word, its local independence of other churches, and its "connexional" dependence on the ministry--repeats itself in the classical pattern of Methodist ministry. For, traditionally, a Methodist minister needs a triple authority: first, the direct personal call of God; secondly, the call of the "Connexion" as a result of testing the evidences of the prior divine call; and thirdly,--because "no man can prescribe what Pastor I use"--there must be a willingness on the part of the local community to accept his ministry. Wesley favored episcopacy, not because it had any Divine Right--he utterly rejected the fact of the Apostolic Succession--but because he believed it to be the most effective form of government that was in accordance with Scripture and the practice of the early church.

The concept of the Church and its ministry has evolved much in Methodism since Wesley's day. Yet one basic principle lies behind all its complicated pattern. Methodism derives organically from the evangelistic and pastoral ministry of Wesley himself. He took all responsibility before God and man for what was done. To use the modern phrase, he was the "essential minister." That ministry he delegated, by his own freely accepted responsibility, to the constitutional bishops of America, and to a conference in Great Britain, legally constituted.

The Challenge of the Ecumenical Movement to Methodism

Gerald H. Anderson

William Temple, in his enthronement sermon at Canterbury Cathedral in 1942, used the phrase "the great new fact of our era" to describe the Christian world-fellowship which we call the ecumenical movement. Today, as we survey what has happened in the ecumenical movement during the past eighteen years, especially with the emergence of the World Council of Churches, we affirm with new certainty and clarity: it is great, it is new, and it is a fact.

The initial novelty of the movement, however, has worn off. As Professor Albert C. Outler has described it, "the ecumenical honeymoon is over." The early years of comparative analysis are past and we are now in a new stage of development. The period of confession is over; we are now to be reconciled. To *be* together is no longer enough; we must *move* forward. The Faith and Order Commission experienced this turning point at the Lund Conference in 1952. The Lund Report states, "There are truths about the nature of God and His Church which will remain forever closed to us unless we *act* together." Two years later the Evanston Assembly put it this way, "To stay together is not enough. We must *go* forward."

The question for us then stands: what does this mean for Methodism? Are we progressing with the rest of the ecumenical movement in this new development? Many would like to answer this in the affirmative, pointing out that Methodism has its very strength in action and that we therefore have an important role to play in this new stage of ecumenical life. Certainly it is true that Methodism is an acting church. The challenge of the ecumenical movement today, however, demands that it be also a thinking church.

One of the abilities and tendencies which we have inherited from our tradition is that of acting to meet practical needs and then of finding theological reasons, if possible, later. This has, indeed, been the vital ethos of Methodism: experience and action. The time has come, however, when Methodism must

do more serious thinking as a church if it is going to meet the challenge of the ecumenical movement. If our witness for action in the life of the church is going to contribute significantly to the rising stream of ecumenical churchmanship, then we must be able to show that Methodism is not only moving but that it knows whither and why.

The task which confronts Methodism today before it can "go" anywhere in the ecumenical movement is to come to some understanding, in a more specific way, of what we as a church see as being our basic position in such areas as doctrine, authority, and polity. We ourselves need a clearer understanding of what we believe, what we are, and what we do. It is no longer adequate merely to say that our position is contained in "The Articles of Religion," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, his *Notes on the New Testament*, the hymns of Charles Wesley, and the *Discipline*. This does not *necessarily* mean that our traditional position as found in these sources is no longer adequate, but it does mean that this position needs at least to be clarified for purposes of better understanding and communication.

Let us now examine the three areas mentioned above where Methodism is being challenged by the ecumenical movement.

I. DOCTRINE

A criticism of Methodism that one commonly hears in ecumenical circles is, "You Methodists don't have any theology!" What is really meant is that the theology of Methodists is so unpredictable that it appears as though a theology of Methodism does not exist. We can well sympathize with those who have this impression.

The emphasis of Wesley was not on theology and Methodism was not a theological schism. Therefore neither Wesley nor Methodism found it necessary to define the theological position systematically. However, to think that neither Wesley nor Methodism has a theology is to misinterpret the facts. One needs only to read through a few of *Wesley's Standard Sermons* to discover the deep current of theological conviction which motivated his ministry. The same remains true of Methodism to this very day as revealed in "the cumulative character of our Discipline."

Wesley had no doubt concerning the *fact* of the Trinity, original sin, the inspiration of Scripture, the Incarnation, and the

Atonement. He did have many doubts, however, concerning specific *theories* about these doctrines and did not consider right opinions about them as either essential for salvation or of the essence of Methodism. "What Wesley did," writes Dean Robert E. Cushman, "was not to define the truth about Christ but to persuade, and plead, and urge men to surrender to Him."[1]

E. H. Sugden has shown that when Wesley spoke of "our doctrines" he did not mean the whole round of Christian orthodoxy, but he did mean specifically the doctrines of "justification by faith, entire sanctification, the atonement of our Lord, assurance of pardon by the witness of the Spirit, the impossibility of a sincere seeker after the Truth being lost, and free grace as opposed to predestinarianism."[2]

Wesley held that "our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are repentance, faith, and holiness." Here is the genius of our theological heritage from Wesley: that he insisted upon the great central affirmations of the Christian faith and not particular theories about them. It is the fact of our experience that is essential and not our explanation of the fact.

This unique combination of loyalty to the Apostolic Faith, the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation, together with an intellectual freedom to understand this faith in terms of modern experience, has given Methodism the ability to speak to all men, in all times, and in all places. It was precisely this deposit in the heritage of Methodism that enabled it to rise out of the nineteenth century controversies surrounding the names of Darwin, Spencer, Strauss, and the Tübingen school of biblical criticism. Again in the early part of the twentieth century it served Methodism well during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.

The fact remains, however, that even after having stated this traditional doctrinal position of the Methodist Church, we must then say that this alone is inadequate for present day ecumenical conversations. There are many areas, such as the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of the Ministry, where we claim to share the "common faith," but have never

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[1]Robert E. Cushman, "Jesus as Lord," *Drew Gateway*, XXVIII (Winter, 1958), p. 94.

[2]Edward H. Sugden (ed.), *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley* (2 vols.; 4th ed.; London: Epworth Press, 1955), I, p. 19.

made a statement as to what we understand that faith to mean.[3] The ecumenical movement wants to know what it is we believe God has given Methodism to say to the Church.

Wesley's advice to "think and let think" rings in our ears. We respond with generous tolerance toward the convictions of others, but too often forget to do the homework of our own thinking. Kenneth Grayston, writing in the *Ecumenical Review*, has described the Methodist situation in this regard quite rightly when he says, "We are living on concealed theological assumptions--concealed often from ourselves."[4] Perhaps we need a theological definition of our freedom!

In facing the full sweep of the doctrinal challenge of the ecumenical movement we should be aware of two dangers.

1. The danger of Methodism having nothing to say theologically; as though our heritage had no theological substance. To respond in this fashion would be to betray our heritage.

2. The danger of so formalizing the Methodist position on doctrinal issues that we become another confessional church (in the Reformation sense). This would also betray our heritage.

The pathway between these pitfalls is precarious, and yet it is the path by which Methodism, being faithful to its heritage, can give positive and dynamic leadership in the area of doctrine to the ecumenical movement.

II. AUTHORITY

"By what authority are you doing these things?" (Mark 11:28). This is a question that the churches today are repeatedly asking each other in an attempt to reach a common understanding of the Christian authority for doctrine, liturgics, and polity.

There is hardly any question but that John Wesley looked to the Bible for his authority. He said, "I am a man of one Book"; he described Methodism as "Scriptural Christianity"; he defined the aim of Methodism as being "to spread Scriptural Holiness"; and he called Methodists "Bible Christians."

In practice, however, personal experience played a most important role in his theology. Taking a strictly empirical view of Wesley, it has even been suggested that he founded

[3]There have been, of course, important contributions on these subjects from individual Methodists and in statements from the British Methodist Church.

[4]*Ecumenical Review*, IX (January, 1957), p. 182.

religion and theology in the fact of experience.[5] But Harald Lindström, in his recent study of *Wesley and Sanctification*, rectifies this one-sided exposition when he says that "Scripture was the obvious foundation to which Wesley always referred, but it was interpreted in the light of experience."[6] There is good basis for this assessment when we read Wesley's own statement in the preface to his *Standard Sermons*, "I have endeavored to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not."

But this is not the whole picture of Wesley's concept of authority, even though it is the most apparent. The late Dr. Umphrey Lee pointed out how in Wesley, inward, personal religious experience is subject to the regulative control of the Bible, particularly as interpreted by the primitive Fathers and reason.[7] Wesley's education and background in the Church of England gave him a deep appreciation and understanding of the place which Christian tradition has in the authority of the faith.

As Methodism spread to the American frontier, the authority of Scripture and experience was increasingly emphasized by the circuit-riding clergy. The influence of the broader concept of authority such as Wesley held, especially with regard to Christian tradition as interpreted by the Early Church Fathers, lost its place in the perspective due to the social and cultural situation which faced the frontier church.

In its place, through the past 180 years, has grown up a "Methodist tradition" which colors everything we do and believe. Some of the factors which have contributed to this tradition of Methodism in America as it has developed from colonial times to the present day are:[8] the pioneers' independent individualism; the colonial spirit of political and religious radicalism; the limited opportunity for formal theological education of ministers during the first half-century of Methodism in America; the development and success of the technique

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[5]H. Bett, *The Spirit of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1937), p. 131.

[6]Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 5.

[7]Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1936), p. 143.

[8]See William Warren Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America* (New York: Harper, 1930), pp. 1-10.

of revivalism to win people to the church; the issues of slavery and segregation; periods of sectionalism, nationalism, and internationalism running parallel in the political and religious history of America; and the deep impact of liberalism on American Methodist theology. The net result is that today, in large segments of American Methodism, the tradition prevails that every man not only has equal right to his own opinion, but that every man's opinion is equally right.

This recognition of a "Methodist tradition" places us right in the center of "Tradition and Traditions as an Ecumenical Problem."[9] To deal with this problem, the Lund Conference on Faith and Order adopted the following recommendation of the report of Section II on Continuity and Unity:

> We propose the establishment of a Theological Commission to explore more deeply the resources for further ecumenical discussion to be found in that common history which we have as Christians and which we have discovered to be longer, larger, and richer than any of our separate histories in our divided churches. Such a study would focus not only on the hard cores of disagreement between us but also on the positive discoveries there to be made of the various levels of unity which underly our diversities and dividedness.[10]

On the basis of this proposal the "Theological Commission on Tradition and Traditions" was formed as a beginning toward the recognized need for:

> a new and truly ecumenical study of the total historical experience of the Christian community; and this as a theological enterprise which would provide new and solvent insights into the nature of the church and the meaning of the Gospel.[11]

Another angle from which this same problem is being approached can be seen from a recent consultation of twenty-one church historians at the Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, where they considered the theme "Factors in the writing and teaching

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[9]See the article by this title from J. Robert Nelson in *Theology Today*, XIII (July, 1956), pp. 151-165.

[10]*Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order*, ed., Oliver S. Tomkins (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 27.

[11]Albert C. Outler, "A Way Forward from Lund," *Ecumenical Review*, V (October, 1952), p. 60.

of Church History which tend to perpetuate prejudices and denominational bias."

These two examples show the widespread recognition of the fact that "the traditional patterns of church history and the history of doctrine have been more apologetic and partisan than synoptic and ecumenical."[12]

This is all concerned with that area of *authority* which is of paramount importance for the consideration of Methodism today, namely, Tradition and our tradition. Professor Outler sounds the keynote for us when he says

> Our oneness in Christ, which we all confess, implies, among other things, that we have a common history that overarches, and includes our separate histories. Indeed, our separate histories are authentic only to the degree to which they reflect or derive from this common history.[13]

Can we not, in fact, say that Tradition belongs to the essence of the Church? The revelation of God came in an historical person, at an historical moment, under historical circumstances. The account of this is put into a New Testament Canon which is itself tradition. There is only one tradition, Jesus Christ; but there are many witnesses to or *traditions* about this *Tradition* . In fact, we can only come to the Christian Tradition through one or another of our various traditions, and this is the problem; that we must distinguish between the *T* and the *t's*. We are faced with the dialectic of singularity and plurality.

This would suggest a number of questions for Methodism to take into consideration in dealing with this problem:[14]

> 1. What common *traditio* does Methodism share with all existing communities which call and profess themselves Christian.
> 2. What is there in the Methodist tradition that is an 'addition to,' 'deviation from,' or 'enrichment of'

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12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

14 These questions were first formulated by Prof. Georges Florovsky in *a memorandum* to the Enquiry Group on Tradition and Traditions of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. They were then reported by Albert C. Outler, Chairman, in an Interim Report. See the Bulletin from the WCC Division of Studies; Geneva (October, 1955), pp. 13, 14.

the primitive or initial *traditio* ?

3. Does this in any way alter the character and meaning of that 'faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3)?

4. If it does not alter the character and meaning of the faith, is it still essential for the understanding of the 'fullness of the faith'?

5. How far can we recognize the essential complex of *kerygma* and *paradosis* in other Christian communities than our own?

6. When and why does diversity become divisive?

This call to study anew the important role of Tradition, which belongs to the *esse* of the Church, or as the Edinburgh Report of 1937 put it, "the living stream of the Church's life," is not a call to traditionalism. Indeed, we must guard against what Dean J. Robert Nelson has called

> the easy acquiescence to patterns of belief and practice which were fashioned with effort and imagination by our fathers under particular historical circumstances, and then frozen for future generations to appropriate in a manner not only anachronistic but injurious to the work of the Church in the present world.[15]

The Lund Conference, 1952, also recognized this danger when it declared:

> Those who are ever looking backward and have accumulated much precious ecclesiastical baggage will perhaps be shown that pilgrims must travel light, and that, if we are to share at last in the great Supper, we must let go much that we treasure.[16]

Instead of *traditionalism* , the ecumenical movement is calling all churches to reconsider their *traditional* attitudes toward *Tradition* in the light of a careful re-examination of their own *traditions* . The important point for Methodism, at this stage, is to recognize that the triangle of authority (Scripture, tradition, and experience) is not stationary, but spinning on a central axis so as to make it impossible for us to point to any *one* of the three sides for a single answer when asked, "By what authority are you doing these things?"

[15] Nelson, *op. cit.* , p. 164.

[16] *Report* , *op. cit.* , pp. 10, 11.

III. POLITY

Dr. Charles Wesley Ranson, until recently General Secretary of the International Missionary Council, tells of a conversation he had a few years ago with a very able and well-informed colleague in India, who is now a bishop in the Church of South India. When Dr. Ranson, who is an Irish Methodist, asked his friend, "What do you really think is the special contribution of Methodism to the Church of South India?" his friend paused for a moment and said: "Well, that's not an easy question. But if you want a short answer, I should say, skill in ecclesiastical organization."[17]

To those of us for whom Methodism has been the channel through which the Living God has spoken, in whose order we serve in the ministry of reconciliation, through whose hymns our deepest thoughts are expressed, and by whose action for "social holiness" we carry forth the demands for brotherly love in this world, it is indeed "a disquieting thought that modern Methodism is seen by some of our friends and colleagues in other great communions primarily as a piece of well-oiled and relatively smooth-running machinery."[18] It is quite natural that the numerical power and financial strength of Methodism as a great worldwide communion should attract attention. But is it not our own failure as Methodists that these are too often the things which are remembered, and that the things on a deeper level are not recognized? Let us consider a case in point where Methodism today is being challenged in this regard.

At the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1876 a world organization of Methodism was first proposed. The suggestion met with hearty approval and in 1881 the first Ecumenical Methodist Conference met in London. Since that time similar meetings have been held at regular intervals, with the Ninth Conference having met at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, in September 1956.

> The first six Conferences were devoted almost exclusively to fellowship and inspirational addresses, but at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1947 the beginnings of a permanent form of organization were

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17 *Proceedings of the Eighth Ecumenical Methodist Conference* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), p. 271.

18 *Ibid.*

> made. These were perfected at Oxford in 1951 when a Permanent Secretariat was set up, various committees were appointed, and an Executive Committee was formed under instructions to meet annually. At this time the name was changed to World Methodist Council.[19]

The function of the World Methodist Council is summed up in this sentence taken from its *ad interim* constitution: "to do any and all other things necessary to the promotion of World Methodism and its effectiveness as an agency of the Kingdom of God."

It is interesting to note that it was at the very same time when the ecumenical movement was taking on a permanent form of organization with the creation of the World Council of Churches, that Methodism decided to do likewise with the creation of the World Methodist Council. And although the World Methodist Council has stated that it is "far from being in rivalry with the World Council of Churches" and that its "purpose in promoting the closer unity of Methodism is that this may make a stronger contribution to the larger unity of Christ's Church throughout the world," the fact remains that Methodism has created another permanent world organization which may well prove in later years to be but another stumbling block for the ecumenical movement. Indeed, it is ironical that organized world confessionalism has developed to a large degree in consequence of the ecumenical movement.

The challenge put forth by the *Christian Century* a few years ago, protesting against the growth of "ecumenical denominationalism" which, it complained, is little more than "Internationalized Sectarianism" might be given serious consideration by Methodism before exapnding the machinery of its world organization further.

Dr. Ranson speaks prophetically to Methodism when he says:

> We shall not recover those distinctive and ecumenically relevant notes (of Methodism) by a mere revival of antiquarianism. Still less, I believe, shall we recover them by building an impressive organization for world Methodism. We shall have to begin first

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[19] From "The World Methodist Council in *Information Concerning the General Agencies of the Methodist Church* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, n.d.).

> within our own household of faith to learn humbly and penitently what it really means to be a Church and to be a world Church. And that is done by something more fundamental and more profound than well-oiled machinery. To concentrate on organization may be the surest road to ecumenical retrogression and confessional sterility.[20]

This is the challenge we face!

The fact is, however, that we do now have this rather impressive organization for world Methodism, and the alternative of "Either/Or' no longer exists. There is no alternative for us now but to see what we can *do* with what we *have*.

In what ways can we see this new form of institutionalism as having *positive* possibilities for Methodism *and* the ecumenical movement? Is it possible that Methodism can learn some lessons within this new form of world organization about what it means to be a church that will ultimately be of value to the larger ecumenical movement? In answer to these questions the following points suggest two ways in which the World Methodist Council may help Methodism to make positive contributions to the ecumenical movement.

1. It may provide a more adequate framework within which Methodism can realize the values of a fully horizontal ecumenical encounter. Much is to be said for the ecumenical values that can be had from the encounter of Methodists with other Methodists, for there are such great differences within Methodism itself. The fact that the separate Methodist communions are already in "full communion" with each other should be not so much a reason to overlook these differences, but rather a basis upon which they can be resolved. From this encounter Methodism may well have experiences and achievements which will be of value to the ecumenical movement as a whole.

2. It is within such an organizational framework of the whole denomination that the problems of "Doctrine" and "Authority" mentioned in this paper might best be considered by Methodism, The World Methodist Council has, in fact, already taken a step in this direction by sponsoring the first world Institute of Methodist Theological Studies which was held at Lincoln College, Oxford, during the summer of 1958. It is hoped that such study-consultations as this will not only prepare Methodists

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[20]Ranson, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

to assume a more responsible role in the ecumenical movement, but will also produce reports which, though neither definitive nor binding, would be useful for clarification and communication.

The main point is that the work of the World Methodist Council must always be seen within the context of the larger ecumenical movement, and must always be on guard against the temptations of denominational idolatry. In so far as Methodism's new strength and unity contributes to the larger unity of Christ's Church rather than to self-edification, this new step will be justifiable and laudable.

CONCLUSION

Again we ask the question, "What does this new stage of development in the ecumenical movement mean for Methodism?" Basically it means that our concepts of freedom, action, and experience must take on a new dimension. This dimension will be one of greater theological sensitivity. It carries with it an awareness that freedom *of* doctrine does not mean freedom *from* doctrine. It demands full participation in cooperative theological discussions and a willingness to absorb "the corrective impact of collective thinking."

Furthermore, it means that Methodism will bear witness, in these discussions, to the biblical and theological foundations which assert God's possession of and action in the world. This is a testimony which needs to be heard in ecumenical theological discussions, where there is a concept, all too prevalent, of religious escape from the world into a limited "unworldly" sphere of operation.

If we may use the analogy of drama, we would close this paper in the following terms: what Methodism does today, can be considered as rehearsal for its role in the great drama entitled "Christian Unity," the opening night of which is approaching. The ability to play our part well, despite the fact that it is a small part, will have a definite effect on the success of the production. The drama does not depend on us, but our performance could make the difference between the outcome of this production being proclaimed by the critics in our world audience as the one true Church of the Living God, or as only another mediocre achievement of men. Will Methodism be ready for its role? This is the challenge of the ecumenical movement.

Our Wesleyan Heritage

Christian Perfection

Stanley Banks

Now we come to consider the second major part of our Wesleyan heritage--Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection.

Wesley never quarrelled about terms; in his writing and preaching he uses a variety of them to express the same experience; chief among them are holiness, entire sanctification, perfect love, etc. We have chosen to discuss the subject under the title of "Christian Perfection" because Wesley has fully revealed his views on the subject in his writings and especially in his book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, a book which is little known and read today. Also, an American Methodist of a previous generation, J. A. Wood, has extracted for us from the journals, works, sermons and letters of Wesley all he had to say on the subject, and has classified it for his readers in a book entitled *Wesley on Perfection*; unfortunately this is now unobtainable. From these two sources we are able to get Wesley's own view untrammelled by anyone else's interpretation of that view.

In commencing this final lecture, we can do no better than quote from Bishop Mallalieu's introduction to Wood's book, in which he says:

> No one will study Wesley without discovering that he makes a distinction between regeneration and Christian perfection. He teaches that the work is wrought instantaneously, though it may be approached by slow and gradual steps; he denies the possibility of remaining in a justified state while guilty of known sin; he teaches that this experience of perfect love pre-eminently favours the growth of all the Christian graces; he avoids most carefully, and condemns most emphatically, all fanaticism and spiritual pride and foolishness, and shows how easily the experience may be lost; he studies the heart, and watches with the most critical attention the professions and lives of those who assumed to have the experience, and

> compares all with the Word of God: so that we have in Wesley's 'Plain Account of Christian Perfection,' and in his frequent allusions to the subject in his Journals and Sermons, the summation of all that is essential to the fullest and clearest understanding of this whole subject.[1]

We now turn to discover whether or not this is so, and in doing so we shall follow the same plan as in the previous lecture. First of all we shall consider the matter

I. HISTORICALLY

There are three distinctive phases in Wesley's life in respect of his experience and teaching of Christian perfection.

A. His search and discovery.

We can do no better than give the account of this in Wesley's own words which we find in his *Journal* for the month of May, 1765, which he also includes in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection.* Speaking of his teaching on the subject, he writes:

> But how came this opinion into my mind? I will tell you with all simplicity. In 1725 I met with Bishop Taylor's 'Rules for Holy Living.' I was struck particularly with the chapter on intention, and felt a fixed intention to give myself up to God. In this I was confirmed soon after by the 'Christian Pattern' (now known as The Imitation of Christ) by Thomas a Kempis, and longed to give God all my heart. This is just what I mean by perfection now: I sought after it from that hour.

Wesley was then in his twenty-third year and was still at Oxford.

Of the following year, he records in his *Journal* that "the nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in stronger light than it had ever done before."

In 1727 he read two books by William Law, one entitled *Christian Perfection,* and the other *The Serious Call.* He declares after reading these: "I am more explicitly resolved to be all

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[1] Quoted by Bishop W. F. Mallalieu in his "Introduction" in the book, *Christian Perfection as Taught by John Wesley*, compiled by J. A. Wood, p. 7.

devoted to God in body, soul and spirit."

1730 was another important year in his search; he writes:

> In 1730 I began to be a man of one book; to study (comparatively speaking) no book but the Bible. I then saw, in stronger light than ever before, that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness; and I groaned to love God with all my heart and to serve Him with all my strength.

On January 1, 1733, he preached a remarkable sermon on the circumcision of heart. Over thirty years later he said of this sermon, "It contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart."

Five years later he is still searching and he expresses his longing in poetry which breathes out his yearning:

> O grant that nothing in my soul
> May dwell but Thy pure love alone!
> O may Thy love possess me whole,
> My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
> Strange flames far from my heart remove,
> My every act, word, thought be love.

In May of the same year he passed through the great spiritual crisis, which has been described as his "evangelical conversion." This was a very distinctive step towards the goal of Christian perfection.

In 1771, as he looked back in retrospect, he wrote,

> Many years since, I saw that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. I began by following after it, and inciting all with whom I had intercourse to do the same. Ten years after, God gave me clearer light than I had before on the way to attain it, namely, by faith in the Son of God. And immediately I declared to all, 'We are saved from sin, we are made holy by faith.' This I testified in private, in public, in print, and God confirmed it by a thousand witnesses.

The question has been raised many times down the past two centuries as to whether or not Wesley had a definite experience of what he preached. Some Methodists, like Dr. Sangster, have sought to persuade people that he did not claim such an experience. Such a conclusion seems rather remarkable in the light of all the evidence.

Three observations seem to be relevant in this matter.

First, surely it is not unreasonable to infer that he had such an experience when one considers that during a ministry of almost fifty years he made this doctrine one of his leading themes. He declared that its exposition and exemplification was the chief reason for the raising up of the Methodists. He clearly taught the possibility of such an experience in this life, and urged Christians everywhere to seek it, and rejoiced with those who had a testimony to it. He preached sermons, wrote pamphlets and composed hymns on the subject, and strongly insisted that his preachers should preach it. In some places he definitely related the spiritual decline to the neglect of preaching on this subject. In the light of this we might well ask in the words of Dr. Jessop: "Who could have any respect for or confidence in such a man as a spiritual leader if, after all this, he did not know the experience for himself?"[2]

In the second place there is at least one indication in his *Journal* that he did enjoy such an experience. It is to be found in the record for December, 1744.

> In the evening, while I was reading prayers at Snowsfield, I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought as well as action and word, just as it was rising in my heart, and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride or selfishness. I waked next morning, by the grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe, and tender sense of the presence of God, as greatly confirmed me therein: so that God was before me all day long; and I could truly say when I lay down at night, 'now I have lived a day.'

One further observation is needed, and it has been well expressed for us by J. A. Wood, who observes that

> Wesley seldom recorded his personal religious experiences in his Journals, and yet we have as much about his experience of sanctification as of justification. The most he says about his justification is, that he felt his heart 'strangely warmed.' This is often quoted regarding his justification, while the foregoing statement is as clear and definite regarding

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[2]Harry E. Jessop, *Heritage of Holiness*, p. 85.

> his sanctification. There is just as much propriety, in the light of his Journals, in asserting that he did not claim to be justified, as that he did not claim to be sanctified.[3]

We have no hesitation in saying that Wesley's personal search after perfect love led him to a personal discovery and enjoyment of this experience which gave cogency to his preaching of the truth.

We turn now to consider the second phase of this historical survey of Wesley's teaching and experience of Christian perfection.

B. His teaching and definition.

Because of the limitation of time we must confine ourselves to three quotations from Wesley that set forth quite fairly his teaching and form the basis of his definition of Christian perfection.

The first is taken from his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in which he writes: "In the year 1764, upon the review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed in the following short propositions:

> There is such a thing as perfection, for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
>
> It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to 'go on to perfection' (Heb. 6:1).
>
> It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil. 3:15).
>
> It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor angels, but to God alone.
>
> It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body.
>
> It is salvation from sin.
>
> It is 'perfect love' (I John 4:18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits are rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (I Thess. 5:16).
>
> It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
>
> It is amissable, capable of being lost and of this we

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[3]J. A. Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

> have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this till five or six years ago.
> It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work.
> But is it in itself instantaneous or not? In examining this let us go step by step. An instantaneous change is wrought in some believers. None can deny this. Since that change they enjoy perfect love; they feel this, and this alone, they 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks'. Now this is all that I mean by perfection; therefore these are witnesses of the perfection I preach. But in some this change was not instantaneous. They did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies; yet there is an instant when life ceases. And if sin ceases there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it... Therefore all our preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers constantly, strongly, and explicitly; and all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it.[4]

This brief summary contains all that is basic in Wesley's teaching. Let us add to it a statement from the minutes of the first Methodist Conference held in 1744. Those present sought to include in the minutes a brief definition of what they meant by Christian perfection. Here is the minute as they recorded it:

> A renewal in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. To be a perfect Christian is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, implying the destruction of all inward sin; and faith is the instrument by which such a state of grace is obtained.[5]

The third quotation is from a letter written by Wesley to a Mrs. Maitland who had obviously written to him inquiring about the subject. He replied as follows:

> As to the word' perfection,' it is Scriptural; there-

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[4]John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, pp. 283-285.

[5]Luke Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, Vol. 1, p. 444.

fore neither you nor I can in conscience object to it, unless we would send the Holy Ghost to school, and teach Him to speak who made the tongue. By perfection, I mean the so loving God and your neighbour as to 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks.' He that experiences this is Scripturally perfect. And if you do not, yet you may experience it; you surely will, if you follow hard after it, for the Scriptures cannot be broken. What does their arguing prove who object against Christian perfection? Absolute or infallible perfection I never contend for. Sinless perfection I never contend for, seeing it is not Scriptural. A perfection such as enables a person to fulfil the whole law, and so needs not the merits of Christ--I acknowledge no such perfection; I do now, and always did protest against it. But is there no sin in those who are perfect in love? I believe not; but be that as it may, they feel none--no temper contrary to love, while they rejoice, pray and give thanks continually. And whether sin is suspended or extinguished, I will not dispute; it is enough that they feel nothing but love. This, you allow, we should daily press after, and this is all I contend for.[6]

In all fairness to Wesley, we ought to add a further observation. He always related his teaching to the practical details of every-day life. He did not make the mistake of divorcing creed from conduct or holiness from ethics. As Dr. Workman has suggested: "His evangelical experience did not diminish his moral enthusiasm.... There are no more practical treatises in the English language on the science of living according to Christianity than are found amongst Wesley's sermons."[7] His sermon on "Riches" is a classical example of this. Christian perfection as Wesley defined, guarded and preached it included the whole doctrine of right conduct, duty and virtue.

Almost at the end of his earthly pilgrimage we still find him saying that "loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves, is the perfection I have taught these forty years.

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[6]Wesley's *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 752.

[7]*A New History of Methodism*, edited by W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, George Eayrs, Vol. 1, pp. 212, 213.

I pin down all its opposers to this definition of it. No evasion! No shifting the question! Where is the delusion of this?"[8] Yes, we too ask, where is the delusion of this?

And now we consider the third phase of this survey of Wesley's teaching, namely:

C. Its proclamation and defense:

In the Conference of 1765 the question was raised as to the purpose of God in raising up the Methodists. To this Wesley replied:

> In 1729 my brother and I read the Bible; we saw inward and outward holiness therein, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 we saw that holiness comes by faith. In 1738 we saw that we must be justified before we can be sanctified. But still holiness was our goal, inward and outward holiness. God then thrust us out, utterly against our will, to raise up a holy people. When Satan could not otherwise prevent this, he threw Calvinism in our way, and then Antinomianism, which struck at the root of both inward and outward holiness.[9]

In the process of fulfilling this purpose of raising up a holy people they encountered a great deal of opposition which necessitated a defence of the truths for which they stood.

Between the years 1759 and 1765 there was a holiness revival among the believers. In London a great number professed to have found "full redemption." Wesley and one of his helpers, John Walsh, gathered these together at The Foundery, where they usually met, in order to examine and question them closely as to the genuineness of their testimony. At the conclusion of the examination, Wesley records in his *Journal*: "In London alone I found 652 members of our Society who were exceeding clear in their experience, and whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt."[10] Similar things could be written of many other centres throughout the land during the same period.

In a visit to Cornwall at this time Wesley is grieved by the lukewarmness of the Christians there. In his own characteristic way he seeks to assess the reasons for this, and once again he records them for us.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

[9] *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, Vol. 1, pp. 322-325.

[10] Wesley's *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 464.

> The more I converse with the believers in Cornwall the more I am convinced that they have sustained great loss for want of having the doctrine of Christian perfection clearly and strongly enforced. I see, wherever this is not done, the believers grow dead and cold. Nor can this be prevented but by keeping in them an hourly expectation of being perfected in love.[11]

Invariably Wesley traces the spiritual decline in other societies to this same cause, the neglect of insisting upon and pressing after the experience of perfect love.

There is no doubt that there was some extravagance and a little fanaticism associated with the holiness revival, and this was the thing which the opposition fastened on to, and criticised. This brought forth from Wesley his two most classical statements on the subject, and both were produced in the same year, 1765. One, we have already acknowledged-- *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.* The other was a sermon he preached during that year, entitled, "The Scripture Way of Salvation." These contain his defence of the truth against the charges of his opponents both Calvinistic and Antinomian.

Wesley's great friend and designated successor, John Fletcher, vicar of Madeley, also came to the defence of Wesley's teaching in a series of pamphlets, later produced in book form, and entitled, *Checks to Antinomianism.* This is a monumental work, exhaustive in its treatment of the objections of the opponents, and conclusive in its arguments.

The period from 1762 to 1781 was the one in which the Wesleys and their associates vigorously pressed the instantaneous blessing, and of this period, Dr. Leslie Church wrote:

> In spite of extravagances and misrepresentations, in spite even of impostures, the experience was too widespread to be denied, and too fundamental to be destroyed by ridicule and contempt. He would be a strange critic who could read the intimate confessions of so many sincere people, and conclude they were empty vapourings. It would be more reasonable to say that in them are the movements of the Spirit, too great to be confined within the limits of a theory, and too varied to be brought down to a common de-

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[11] Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People*, p. 129.

> nominator. In attempting to reduce such an experience to a formula there is always the danger of imprisoning the soul....However carefully conceived the theological definition, it cannot contain the heart-throbs of the spirit set free! Whatever the dangers Wesley had to face, who shall say that he was not wise in accepting the risks rather than in rejecting or ignoring the living realities?[12]

Wesley certainly took the risks, but history and experience have vindicated him.

Having considered the historical aspect of the subject, we now turn to consider it

II. SCRIPTURALLY

Let us note, first of all, that the Scriptures do hold out the possibility of an experience of perfection in this life. Whatever the meaning of the word 'perfect,' there is no room to doubt that it is set forth as a goal to be reached by man here and now. Before considering the meaning of the word as used in Scripture, we must establish that this is so.

A. It is commanded by God:

Take the following passages of Scripture as examples of this. First of all, God in speaking to Abraham, says, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Our Lord, speaking to His disciples, commands them: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). The apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians says: "Finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect..." (II Cor. 13:11). And lastly, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts his readers: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..." (Heb. 6:1). It is also fairly clear from Scripture that:

B. Prayers are offered for its accomplishment:

You may recall the prayer that David prayed for his son, Solomon: "And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart..." (I Chron. 29:19).

And what about the well-known prayer which we often use as a benediction at the end of our services?

> Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

It is also fairly obvious from the New Testament that

C. It is set forth as one of the chief purposes of the ministry.

Call to mind the words of the apostle Paul written to the Ephesians: "And He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints...till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). And further words of his, written to the Colossians: "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom: that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:27-28). One further point is worthy of mention, namely, that

D. There are records of people having such an experience whilst still on earth.

Do you remember what God said about Job? "The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like unto him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). What about the arresting words of the Psalmist? "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace" (Ps. 37:37).

We also have the testimony of one of the sacred historians of the Old Testament concerning one of Judah's great kings: "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days" (I Kings 15:14) despite the fact that there were some very imperfect things about his administration of the affairs of the kingdom. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, declares: "Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (I Cor. 2:6). And again in his letter to the Philippians: "Let as many as be perfect be thus minded" (Phil. 3:15).

Here then were people living at different times and in varying circumstances who have an experience which is described by the Scriptural writers by the term "perfect." We must now examine the use of the term in Scripture in order to discover what they meant by it.

In the New Testament there are two important words which express the idea of "perfection"; one is the Greek word "teleios",

and its relative words, and the other is "kartartizo". They are frequently used in the New Testament, and convey the basic meaning and ideas associated with the experience of perfection. If we can grasp the meaning of these two words as used in their New Testament setting, bearing in mind that the context in which they are found is often a most reliable commentary on their meaning, we shall be able in some measure to decide whether or not Wesley was right in teaching Christian perfection as attainable in this life.

> The word 'teleio' occurs twenty-five times in the New Testament. In six typical instances it means to fulfil, to bring to an end, or complete an appointed task. In at least two instances (Luke 13:22; Heb. 13:23) it means perfection following death, and in three (Phil. 3:12; Heb. 2:10; 5:9) this meaning is possible. Completion rather than moral excellence is also indicated elsewhere. In most cases, however, both meanings are included.[13]

Dr. Jessop writes concerning the word:

> It indicates something completed, accomplished, consummated, finished. This word is not used of the believer as a completed possession in this life, but as a process of development and an end not yet attained. It is that long drawn out process leading to perfection in Christian character and experience, and knows no finality here.[14]

Let us consider a few examples of its use in the New Testament. In I Corinthians 15:24 it is translated "end" in the Authorized Version, and implies the consummation of a thing. "Then cometh the END, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." In Philippians 3:19 it is translated "end," in the sense of ultimate destiny.

> For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose END is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (See also I Pet. 4:17).

James also uses the word in his epistle (1:4), where it bears

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[13]George A. Turner, *The More Excellent Way*, pp. 84-95.

[14]Harry E. Jessop, *Foundations of Doctrine*, p. 166.

the meaning of being brought to completion. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." In I Corinthians 14:20 it is translated "men," implying maturity. "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children; but in understanding be MEN."

Here is one other passage, Philippians 3:12, where the word as here used implies reaching a goal. It is set forth as an objective for which a man must strive. It is like the winning post at the end of the race; every runner runs to reach this goal; he may be perfectly fit as a runner, but he knows not the perfection of the winner until he reaches the winning-post. In the following verse the perfection of the winner is in view. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

These then are a few examples of the use of the word "teleios" and its relative words; in the light of these and similar instances it is clear that there is a kind of perfection we cannot fully attain in this life; it is something for the life hereafter. It is a perfection we anticipate and follow after, but which we shall not obtain until we stand in the presence of our Lord.

The second word "kartartizo" conveys a totally different idea of perfection, one which indicates adjustment and fitness resulting from some immediate crisis. Dr. George A. Turner states that "the pre-Christian usage of the word conveyed the idea of preparing or perfecting a thing for its full destination or use."[15] This pre-Christian usage, as found in the Septuagint, has coloured the meaning and use of the word in the New Testament, as will be seen from the following Scriptures in which it occurs. In Matthew 4:21, it is translated "mending." "And going from thence he saw other two brethren, James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother in a ship with Zebedee their father, MENDING their nets." It is clear from this verse that "to perfect" means to repair that which has been damaged, and to make it fit for use. A net is perfect if it adequately fulfils the purpose for which it was made. The word occurs again in Matthew 21:16, where its meaning is "to harmonize." "And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise."

Perfecting music is (or should be) so to arrange it that all

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[15]Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

the discords are lost in a perfection of harmony. In Galatians 6:1, the word is translated "restore," and is used in the sense or adjusting something which has been dislocated. "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual RESTORE such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Paul uses the word again in I Thessalonians 3:10, where it conveys the idea of completing something which is lacking. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and might PERFECT that which is lacking in your faith." And finally we turn to Hebrews 11:3, where the word is translated "framed." Here it is a mechanical term; as when various parts of a machine are fitted together and the whole thing works according to the plan and purpose of the designer. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were FRAMED by the Word of God; so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

In all these, and similar other instances in which the word is used, it conveys the idea of preparing something or other for the fulfilment of the purpose for which it had been made; the emphasis here is not upon finality but upon fitness. This word is not concerned with the perfection which the runner will obtain when he ends the race, but rather with his witness to run the race. It is the perfection of the runner and not of the winner that is in view.

As Dr. Jessop has observed:

> In workmanship a thing is regarded as perfect if it answers the purpose for which it was designed whether it be a watch, a fountain-pen, or a steam engine. Watches do not write letters, neither do fountain pens give us the time. There is a limit and a sphere for each, but if within that limit the purpose is realized that is indicative of its perfection.[16]

Here then are two ideas of perfection; one is perfection after which we must continually aspire, and the other is a perfection we can now enjoy. One is that final and complete perfection for which we must wait until this mortal has put on immortality; but the other is one which consists here and now in deliverance from everything that makes the soul unfit for, and unequal to, the will and purpose of God for our lives.

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[16]Jessop, *Foundations of Doctrine*, p. 167.

We can do no better than conclude this section of our lecture by quoting Dr. Turner's synthesis of the New Testament teaching on this subject:

> The total New Testament teaching, if a synthesis is attempted, may be condensed thus: the goal of the Christian in this present life is the fulfiling of law by love to God and one's neighbour (Matt. 5:45, I John 3:14). This necessitates the cleansing of the heart from selfish traits (II Cor. 7:1), or works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19), so that the sinful element is vanquished. This is a gift of grace rather than a reward of self-effort, received by faith (Acts 15:8-9, 26:18) in Jesus as Sin-bearer (I John 2:2), and is effected by the Holy Spirit, resulting in a complete integration of the personality in Christ and unity within the church (Gal. 2:21, Eph. 4:1-16). It is expressed in effective service (Rom. 12), and culminates in perfect love (I Cor. 13), and union with the divine (John 17).[17]

On the basis of his careful examination of the texts used by Wesley as a foundation for his teaching on Christian perfection, Dr. Turner concludes:

> When Wesley told his generation that a holy life was the chief end of man; that perfect love was a present possibility, and that entire sanctification of life was, like justification, based upon faith, he had a precedent for it in the New Testament.[18]

We can conclude this section of our study with no better statement than this on the Scriptural nature of Wesley's teaching.

The final section of our study takes us into the realm of the practical. For we must consider the subject

III. EXPERIENTIALLY

Many sincere Christians are fearful of the term "perfection"; it is undoubtedly the fear of presumption and fanaticism. Wesley said that the term was thrust upon him by his opponents, and to distinguish it from other ideas of perfection he prefixed the word "Christian." For this reason also he more often than not used the term "perfect love," in order to qualify what he meant.

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[17] Turner, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 114.

[18] *Ibid.*

In order to remove any such fears, and also to show the practical and vital nature of such an experience, we shall briefly consider three things in this final part of our lecture: What is excluded? What is included? What are the distinctive outworkings?

A. What is excluded?

There is only time to summarise this point in the manner in which Wesleyan writers of various denominations have been doing for the past two centuries, following the example of Wesley himself which we quoted earlier in this lecture.

1. It is not the perfection of God in His infinite majesty. This would imply freedom from all faults, mistakes, errors and ignorance of any kind. No sane person claims any such perfection.

2. It is not the perfection of angels in their heavenly abode. Of them we know very little; but we do know that they are unfallen spirits, and we are fallen creatures, so that we can never be what they are.

3. It is not the perfection of our first parents in their garden home. In their pre-fallen state they had sinless souls and deathless bodies. They had no memory of committed sin. Every power they possessed, be it spiritual, mental, moral or physical, was fresh from the hand of God--perfect and without sin. No such perfection is possible to us.

4. It is not the perfection of Christ while He was here on earth. His humanity was free from any personal memories of committed sin. He had a unique, divine relationship with the Father; but we can only approach the Father through Him. We do not claim that kind of perfection.

5. It is not the perfection of redeemed souls in glory. They have vacated this mortal body with its physical limitations, temptations, and the possibilities of falling into sin, and have "put on immortality." They are beyond the reach of these things; but we are not while still on earth; therefore we cannot know in this life the perfection they enjoy.

6. It is not the perfection of one who has matured in grace. Maturity takes time; it is not something which happens in a moment, but rather, is the result of growth, development, discipline, and long experience.

These are some of the things which are excluded from the present attainment of Christian perfection. What then is included?

B. What is included?

What does God require of man while here below? The answer is found in Matthew 12:30-31.

> Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is One Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

God's demands in both the Old Testament and the New Testament are similar. He expects man to love Him supremely, and to love his fellowman relatively--"as himself." This, the Old Testament Jew and the New Testament Christian finds equally impossible apart from divine intervention.

In the book of Deuteronomy, from which these words of our Lord were taken, God tells us how He proposes to make this possible. In Deuteronomy 30:6, we read: "And the Lord God will circumsise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Here is something more than physical circumcision--it is heart circumcision. The New Testament takes up this idea and shows that "heart circumcision" supplants "physical circumcision" in the economy of God (See Rom. 2:29). This use of the term "circumcision" is surely not without significance. Circumcision is a rite which is only performed on the living. It is also an act of cutting away something which is superfluous. Here then God is promising to perform a spiritual operation in the lives of His children which will remove from them all that is contrary to pure love; in order that their hearts might be fully possessed by divine love.

This love is part of the new life imparted in the new birth, and its action within is fourfold.

1. It is expulsive: By it we become aware of the sin that remains even though we are regenerate. It will brook no rival; nor allow flirtations with sin, Satan or the world. It grieves over the things that grieve the Lord in our lives, and longs for deliverance from them. It constrains us to Christ for inward deliverance--or heart circumcision. Thus it is expulsive in its action. This is what Thomas Chalmers, that great Scotch divine, discovered, and of which he spoke in his now famous

sermon on divine love. In it he said: "The heart is so constituted, that the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one."

2. It is persuasive: "The love of Christ constraineth us" says Paul. It had taken hold of him like a fever. It held him in a vice-like grip. He is possessed by it, and it becomes the dynamic of his life, motivating him to service, sacrifice and worship.

3. It is pervasive: It permeates every area and avenue of our lives,--heart, mind, soul and strength. It reaches upward to God and outward to men.

4. It is expansive: There is no end to its increase: we can go on loving and growing in love; and can always be yearning for what Charles Wesley describes as "more and more of love's supply."

The theology of it all, as well as the heart prayer for its accomplishment, is expressed in one of Wesley's hymns:

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels Thy blood
So freely shed for me.

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of love.

C. What are the distinctive outworkings?

For an answer to this question we could turn to a number of New Testament passages, but there is an outstanding one which deals fully with the question: it is our Lord's own answer, given in what has been called The Sermon on the Mount. This is found in Matthew, chapters five to seven.

The pivot around which our Lord's answer revolves is chapter 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This might be described as the text of the sermon. On the basis of this we have unfolded the distinctive marks of the perfect life. We have only time merely to outline what is clearly revealed of this life; it really

needs a study all on its own.

The people are described as "blessed." Whilst living on earth they are really happy, and are showing forth the qualities of a divine, distinctive, and developing life.

Our Lord reveals what they are in themselves--renounced in spirit, merciful, meek, pure in heart, peacemakers, righteous, etc. He then goes on to describe what they are to the world--they are salt and light. Their influence is hidden and pervasive like salt, and is seen and illuminating as light. Following this He discusses their relationship to the past, and suggests that they fulfil rather than destroy that which belongs to the past (5:17-20). The next part deals with our relationship with others (5:21-47). In chapter five there are twenty-seven marks of the perfect life. In chapter six and part of chapter seven, our Lord reveals why men do not reach this goal; the reason being inward division--the divided heart.

The range then of these chapters is broad; it covers our intentions, our thoughts, our speech, our domestic relationships, our demeanor, our attitude to those who are socially superior to us, and to those who are socially inferior, and to our enemies as well as our friends. It is a life, as our Lord indicated, which is known by its fruits, and which has survival value in it, as is clear from the concluding illustration of the sermon--the house built upon the rock stands the storm.

One of our contemporary writers has said that "the greatest need of modern Christianity is the re-discovery of the Sermon on the Mount as the only practical way to live." If we are going to see this accomplished, then we must discover for ourselves the kind of Christian experience of which this is the distinctive out-working, and provides the soil in which such a life can develop. We shall never win the world by being like it; but by living a life like this we shall create a longing in others for a similar kind of life.

We recall the words of Gandhi spoken to a missionary in India who was interviewing him. "Practice your religion without adulterating it or toning it down" he said; and that is exactly what the experience of Christian perfection enables us to do.

We have now completed our study on this aspect of our heritage. It is something more than a tradition we have received from others. It is a three-fold legacy--an experience to be enjoyed, a doctrine to be preached, and a life to be lived.

Book Reviews

James D. Robertson, Ph.D., Book Review Editor

The Teaching Task of the Local Church, Harold Carlton Mason. Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1959. 214 pages. $3.75.

The writer of this text speaks out of a long and rich experience as pastor, teacher, and school administrator at the high school, college, and seminary levels. The volume was written to implement the author's *Abiding Values in Christian Education* (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1955), which covers the principles of Christian education. This new book seeks to relate those principles to the practical task of education in the local church.

Beginning chapters provide orientation to the subject. Subsequent chapters discuss such matters as personnel and agencies of the church school, pupil classification, record-keeping, plant and equipment, promotion and publicity, educational evangelism, and the rural church school. The book is compact with practical knowledge, always presented in the context of recent educational developments. The number of topics so carefully treated under the several chapter-headings belies one's first impression of this modest-sized volume. The chapter which discusses church school agencies is replete with information relating to teachers' meetings, departmental organization, the library, vacation and week-day church schools, and camping activities. The book should prove a valuable guide to the conduct of the teaching task of the local church. That which will gratify many a reader is Dr. Mason's loyalty to the Bible as *the* Book.

The author not only knows the subject whereof he speaks; he knows children and young people, who, after all, are to be the ultimate beneficiaries of his labor.

Here is a Christian education textbook with its feet on the ground. It avoids on the one hand the absurdities of an impractical pedagogy based on romantically--conceived notions of teaching; and on the other hand, it escapes the naive spectacle of the teacher, poised for attack with an assortment of sleight-

of-hand tricks and other irrelevant gadgets.

James D. Robertson

A Reporter Finds God through Spiritual Healing, by Emily Gardiner Neal. New York: Morehouse-Gorham Company., 1956. 192 pages. $3.50.

Can a person be instantly healed, by spiritual means, of observable physical and organic afflictions and diseases? This book gives an affirmative answer, documenting cases involving such diverse conditions as cancer, tuberculosis, brain fever, and broken bones in patients from new-born infants to 68 years of age.

The author is no apostle of some sensational "healer." The material from which the book was written is drawn primarily from healing services conducted in Protestant Episcopal churches by clergymen of that denomination. Mrs. Neal, a newspaper reporter and near-agnostic, was an unwilling onlooker at such a service, and two specific cures which she observed shocked her into the investigation--at first intended to "explain" such things--which led the author to a vital faith in Christ and ultimately resulted in this book.

The author devotes relatively little space to healings which could be explained as psychosomatic, although she recognizes the value of such healings; for her aim is to show that God can and does, today, heal physical afflictions by supernatural intervention in response to prayer. This alone is eminent justification for the book. In addition, however, she discusses dispassionately and clearly the factors which are conducive to spiritual healing and the implications of spiritual healing. She strongly emphasizes that healing services should be related to the worship and sacraments of established churches. She makes it clear that spiritual healing is intended by God as a means of bringing people to faith in Christ.

It would appear that the churches ought either to prove this book false or else seriously apply its implications.

J. Harold Greenlee

Basic Beliefs, An Introductory Guide to Christian Theology, by Donald E. Demaray. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958. 140 pages. $2.00.

In the world of affairs we are living in the century of the common man; in the church--the era of the layman. The dean of the School of Religion of Seattle-Pacific College has made a valuable contribution to that rapidly growing list of religious books for laymen. In *Basic Beliefs*, Dr. Demaray has "stepped down" some of the loftiest truths of our holy Christianity to the language level of the man in the pew. And yet the virility and clarity of his thought and style make the book an appealing "refresher" for those well-informed in doctrinal matters.

In fourteen brief chapters our author moves all the way from arguments for the existence of God to evidences of "last things." Though this *Guide* is definitely doctrinal in content it is designed to shape the life as well as the mind of Christians. The breadth of the author's training is reflected in the way he draws upon both historic and current thought-trends in the Church in order to mark well the path to and through the great centralities of the Bible. The author senses the need of stimulating sound thinking on Biblical truths, and to this end uses a series of well-phrased questions at the end of each chapter to provoke further meditation and discussion upon things spiritual. A selected bibliography on each major doctrine discussed furnishes guidance for further study.

Notwithstanding the merits of this book, this reviewer would point up some things which seem necessary to him for a balanced view of Biblical truth. In treating the "permanence of the *Imago Dei*," Dr. Demaray could have shown that even in this life some men may commit the unpardonable sin which puts them beyond conversion. That state would rob man of his freedom to choose God (pp. 53, 54).

The author declares, "Any honest Christian, however saintly, would readily admit that his experience of 'oneness' with God has been wretchedly incomplete and woefully spasmodic (p. 71)." Does this not absolutize on what most professing Christians might have to confess but what is not universally true of all? This reviewer has met a few saints who have joyfully declared, and that in the presence of those who knew them best, that they have not been "conscious of a break with God" for as long as fifty years. What does the New

Testament mean when it calls for "constantly abiding" in Christ? (John 15; I John 2, 3). At another point Dr. Demaray might have helped the lay reader to keep his line of thought clear by definitely pointing out that it is hereditary sin that is cleansed in entire sanctification, and not just the acquired uncleanness of committed sins.

To some readers a different organization of content might have been beneficial at one basic point. While the Holy Spirit is presented in both His person and work, yet from the chapter titles, His place seems to be more incidental than fundamental. Would it not be more honoring to the Holy Spirit Himself and more helpful to this confused generation to show the Holy Spirit's co-equality with the Father and the Son by devoting a chapter to His person and ministry?

No doubt the simplification of the doctrines handled and the brevity of the volume account for these and any other omissions which might have helped the careful student to have some of his questions more quickly answered.

Evidently intrigued by the penetrating insights yet stylistic simplicities of such writers as C. S. Lewis, Dr. Demaray has striven for and achieved a style and diction that is bound to make this a very usable volume for serious youth and adult study groups.

Delbert R. Rose

Basic Evangelism, by C. E. Autrey. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959. 183 pages. $2.95.

The Professor of Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has compiled in this volume the basic outline of evangelism as it is taught today in the classroom of the world's largest theological school. Imbued with a warm evangelical spirit, Dr. Autrey sets forth systematically an aggressive program of soul-winning, an emphasis so characteristic of his church denomination.

The whole field of evangelism is treated, particularly from the standpoint of the local church. The emphasis is upon method, although attention is given to the theology, Biblical basis, and motivation for evangelism. Surely this is an ambitious task for a brief volume, and for this reason some areas

of evangelistic activity are given only general reference. Perhaps the treatment of the church revival is the most complete, although even here the discussion calls for some expansion.

Sometimes repetitious but always inspirational, the book is clear in its supreme purpose--that of strengthening the work of soul-winning. Apart from this divine passion to seek and to save the lost, neither the individual Christian nor the Church has any real reason for existence. The pastor who wants to take a refresher course in the main task of the people of God could well profit from reading this book.

Robert E. Coleman

Evolution and Christian Thought Today, Russell L. Mixter (ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959. 238 pages. $4.50.

With the other works which have appeared on the centenary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, it is fitting that one should appear which is written from the evangelical point of view, dealing with the major questions related to Christian thought at the end of a century. This volume is expressive of the thought and conclusion of thirteen members of the American Scientific Affiliation, the opening essay being a survey and an assessment of the impact of Darwin upon biographical theory, particularly as that theory touches upon points vital to Christian faith.

A review which would seek to characterize in detail the positions held by the several contributors would, of course, require a chapter in itself. The reader whose interest in the subject is vital will desire to make his own survey of the materials. This reviewer found himself delighted with the general reserve with which most of the writers expressed themselves, and with the basic sanity of the several approaches. Some of the chapters are, we dare to venture, beyond the competence of the average reader, being the work of specialists in the areas concerned.

The reader who desires a series of witty diatribes against some caricature of Darwinism will find the book disappointing. The contributors forego the luxury of seeing straw men topple, and of repeating the usual cliches concerning their own or other people's ancestries. It is this sobriety and seriousness which

make the volume so largely of merit. It does not seek to write "Finis" after every area of controversy. It does seek to expose issues and to point to the area or areas in which solutions will be found, if at all, to the multitude of questions raised by a century of biological inquiry for Christian theology.

Harold B. Kuhn

Evangelical Bible Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles, by Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959. 435 pages. $6.95.

Since this is only the second volume to appear in a projected forty volume series it may be well to describe its format. It is similar to the twelve-volume *Interpreter's Bible* (1951-57) in having on each page first a passage in English translation, then exegesis of it, then exposition. It differs in using for text neither the King James nor Revised Standard Version but the American Standard Version of 1901. It frequently cites in the exegesis the other two, usually to disagree with KJV and to agree with RSV. Its general introduction is briefer than in the *Interpreter's Bible*, including for example no discussion of possible sources, of form critical inferences, or of the Greek text. This is contributed by Professor Earle who also provides in the exegesis a careful comment on each significant word, and other detail. Some of this is merely data from the concordance, comparison of views of earlier commentaries, lexica, etc., scriptural sources or parallels.

The exposition is provided by Professor Carter. It indicates the divisions and subdivisions of the text and revels in further numerical analysis which doubtless will be welcomed by some preachers. Much here is simple and direct explanation. To the same writer are due most of the geography--with a flavor of modern color--and the Additional Notes at the end of several chapters, on quite various subjects, some of them simply quoted from other writers. Indeed both editors depend heavily on others as the abundant notes honestly indicate. (Future volumes would do well to use less minute type for the references.) They therefore make available some quite up-to-date information, but not about proselytes of the gate (p. 150). Neither the notes nor the extended bibliographies at the end

cite, I believe, any work not written or translated in English nor do they show the writers' firsthand knowledge of other French or German works. It is a pity that the somewhat revolutionary work in the last three editions of the commentary of Meyer by Haenchen was too recent or too foreign to be used. Perhaps the language limitation is a concession to the lay readers for whom Greek words are also avoided or at least transliterated and translated. The two writers do not overlap each other, and in general the proof reading is well done.

The doctrinal viewpoint is not easy to characterize. Acts is not a theological storm center and the comments here are too simple to be controversial. On matters of introduction the book is apparently as conservative as the editors' conscience permits. According to the flap and foreword, "the series is evangelical in the historical sense, being sympathetic to the principles of the evangelical revival of the 18th century." It evidently admires Adam Clarke among the ancients, and F. F. Bruce "who is probably the leading conservative New Testament scholar in England today" (p. 72), and a member of the Advisory Board, and the author of three recent commentaries on Acts. Evidently there is some resistance to predestination (pp. 40, 191) and extreme dispensationalism (p. 102). The odd selection of topics for additional notes does not betray a special viewpoint. In casting lots it is assumed the early Christians made a mistake though Acts does not say so (p. 22f.), but in the community of goods any suggestion that the disciples were mistaken is rejected (p. 67) because Acts does not say so. Just which of the various conservative groups will find their sympathies and antipathies exactly matched by this volume is too delicate a question for the present reviewers' competence.

Henry J. Cadbury

Best Sermons (1959-1960 Protestant edition), G. Paul Butler (ed.). New York: T. Y. Crowell Co., 1959. 304 pages. $3.95.

After a four-year interim another volume of *Best Sermons* makes its appearance. The forty-two sermons in this edition are from Protestant sources, representing ten American denominations and five European countries. Almost all were preached within the past two years. A glance at the list of

preachers and sermon topics promises much. Most of the men are eminent in their respective denominations. For the first time, laymen are represented.

These messages come to grips with spiritual and social needs of our day. Perhaps there never was a time when the pulpit evidenced greater awareness of contemporary problems than at present. Diagnosis here is excellent. The solution is the Christian faith--unfortunately, in the opinion of some, not always here presented with the forthrightness of the Biblical plan of salvation. Most of the sermons are topical in form, most of them begin with a text. There is a good balance between Biblical and life-situation approaches. Generally speaking the sermons are rich in Biblical reference and insight. The pulpit of today makes wide use of the Bible for illustrative ends. These messages are rich in their variety and aptness of extra-Biblical allusions--literature, history, nature, contemporary thought. Structurally speaking, many of the sermons would serve as models.

This book will be worthwhile to those who seek to learn about the content and style of contemporary preaching, to those who would increase their talent for making the Bible relevant to human need, and to those who would learn better how to adapt to homiletical ends the abundance of material that literature and life affords.

James D. Robertson

Between the Testaments, by Charles F. Pfeiffer. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 132 pages. $2.95.

The student of the New Testament is here presented with a very convenient account of the important centuries between the Old and the New Testaments. To many Bible students this period of four hundred years is virtually a dark age. It was, however, anything but that; knowledge of the four hundred intervening years is imperative to one who seeks to know the religious, political, and intellectual environment of the New Testament. Indeed, no adequate grasp of the New Testament teaching is possible without a knowledge of this environment. The book is divided into two parts--the Persian period and the Greek period. Both periods lasted approximately two hundred years each. The author, in a concise but readable manner,

summarizes the rise and fall of Persia and the relation of these to the Jews in general. It is interesting to note that on the whole the Persians were favorable to the Jews. The Hellenistic period was marked by hostility to Jewish interests. Circumstances which led to the Hellenistic conquest of Jewish beliefs and the resulting reaction--the Maccabean struggle for independence--are set forth in a clear and interesting manner. The author, who has written a book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, gives appropriate recognition and place to the Qumran community in the Jewish sects of the Christian era. Dr. Pfeiffer, contrary to such writers as Charles Foster Kent and Stewart Perowne, finds little that is admirable in Herod the Great. The volume includes a helpful chronology, an index, and a short bibliography for further study. The book is a convenient manual for one who needs to know this inter-testament background and who lacks time or facilities for the more involved reviews and discussions of the subject. The publishers have placed the material in an attractive format.

George A. Turner

The Rise and Development of Calvinism, John H. Bratt (ed.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959. 134 pages. $2.75.

This book, written by four professors at Calvin College in Holland, Michigan, presents a summary of the life and work of John Calvin and traces the main stream of Calvinism through the centuries from Calvin's day to the present. The editor writes the opening chapter on Calvin and the concluding chapter on "The History and Development of Calvinism in America." Other chapters trace the spread of Calvinism in Switzerland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England. The volume provides a helpful and concise history of a great branch of Protestantism that has made "an incalculable impact on the life of mankind."

Obviously it is written by men who are enthusiastic about John Calvin and who desire an unadulterated Calvinism. For example, it is noted that American liberal theology, which is essentially man-centered and thus "the sworn enemy of theocentric Calvinism," takes the form of "Arminianism, Universalism, Classic Modernism, and Christian Realism (p. 123)." The authors seem to fail to realize that there is

such a thing as an evangelical Arminianism that finds its basis and authority in the Bible.

That Calvinism and its five major points have fallen on hard times is recognized by each contributor. Though achieving high pinnacles of development and influence, for example, in Switzerland, Germany, and France, in each of these areas it "subsequently floundered (p. 60)." Scotland, where the Calvinistic movement claimed such leaders as John Knox and Thomas Chalmers, is only "nominally Calvinistic" today while the vast majority of the people pass the churches by (p. 107). "Today Calvinism is weak in England (p. 110)." In America Calvinism is a "struggling remnant (p. 132)," with only five or six small denominations that are still quite thoroughly imbued with Calvinism. They include the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Protestant Reformed and the Orthodox Protestant Reformed Churches, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Free Magyar Reformed Church.

This reviewer would like to submit that the decline of Calvinism which these writers indicate provides another testimony in history that the whole truth is rarely found in extremes. Though Protestantism is greatly indebted to the life and labors of John Calvin, it is necessary to recognize that his extreme view of an absolute Divine Sovereignty represented an abnormal reaction to Roman Catholicism on the one hand and humanism on the other. The subsequent development of Calvin's view in the famous "Five Points" of Calvinism is the flowering of this extreme and one-sided conception of Divine Sovereignty. While history likewise records extreme reactions to Calvinism, such as Unitarianism and Modernism, it also witnesses to a needed and healthy corrective to both of these extremes in a theological position that takes into consideration a balanced view of Divine Sovereignty and of human responsibility. Wesleyan Arminianism and modified forms of Calvinism are testimonies to such a corrective.

There is a thorough and valuable bibliography at the end of each chapter. For pastors, laymen, and students alike, this volume is valuable as a concise history of Calvinism.

William M. Arnett

Encyclopedia for Church Group Leaders, Lee J. Gable (ed.). New York: Association Press, 1959. 633 pages. $7.95.

The title of this compilation of writings by leaders in the field of Christian education suggests a volume devoted exclusively to group techniques; actually the book covers a rather wide range of additional topics in religious education.

Part I is devoted to theology, the understanding of age groups, and the leader and the group as a team. In Part II various questions concerning Christian nurture are raised, and consideration is given to the aims of Christian education and to the part which the church and home play in the educative process. Bearing on the title of the volume directly are such topics as how group leaders can know the individuals in their groups, knowing what is important about the group process, and how to plan for its use. Part III is devoted to ways of working with church groups, such as leading group discussions and guiding group activities, role playing as a technique in group dynamics, and the use of small groups in "buzz sessions," "the cube plan," and "the dream plan." Included in this part of the book are discussions of story telling, drama, and the use of audio-visual aids. Part IV is given over entirely to organization and administration in religious education, leadership training, evaluation of the educational program, and planning by the teacher.

The primary aim of religious education is given as "trying to help men and women, boys and girls to learn and to follow the teachings of Jesus such as that implied in the two commandments, "Love God," and "Love your neighbor."

The child is to be guided in relation to his church and his home; in his social relationships; in his increasing knowledge and appreciation of the Bible. Juniors are to develop an understanding and appreciation of the teachings and life of Christ, and to accept Him as Savior and Lord and live accordingly. They are to develop an appreciation of the Bible and a desire and ability to participate in the Christian Church. Adults are to increase in their ability to understand and use the Bible, and to interpret it. They should seek to clarify their religious beliefs and to know the peace of absolute conviction and commitment.

Group dynamics is defined as a study of the forces that are at work in groups of people. It is pointed out that group inter-

action can go through a process of growth and maturation similar to that of an individual, finally becoming mature; that the responsibility of the leader in guiding group discussion involves knowledge of the participants in the group activity.

Role-playing in group dynamics is not made so significant as role-playing in the dramatic arts. The Church is rediscovering the arts. The author writes that drama is one of the major forms to be a part of this renaissance in the Church. Christian drama finds its origins and continuing illustration in the life of Jesus. His life is *the* Christian drama because it unfolds the spirit of God taking on flesh and living in the world creatively against the forces that sought to kill it.

The ambitious character of the book is revealed by its twenty-two major divisions which are subdivided into more than one hundred articles dealing with many fields in Christian education. Among the leaders in theology and religious education named as contributors are Harkness, Cummings, Lobingier, Hainer, Sherrill, the Eakins, Snyder, Maves, Bowman, Vieth, Fallaw, Jones, Shields, Herriott and McKibben.

Harold C. Mason

The Works of John Wesley, Volume XII. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959. 528 pages. $3.95.

The reprinting of all the writings of John Wesley, undertaken for the first time in a century by Zondervan, is a distinct contribution to the religious book-output of our generation. The set, projected to consist of fourteen volumes and including a full index, will be a treasure-house of literature for minister or layman.

This twelth volume in the reprinting of *The Works of John Wesley* composes the many hundreds of personal letters which Mr. Wesley addressed to his numerous friends and associates. Several are written to his mother and father and other members of his immediate family. The letters reveal a wealth of information and a wide interest in many subjects--social, personal, political, scientific, ecclesiastical, and spiritual. They are arranged in a general chronological order and cover most of the lifetime of Wesley.

Howard F. Shipps

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, Vol. I, by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959. 320 pages. $4.50.

Thirty expository sermons preached as a series constitute the present volume. Since this reviewer had the opportunity last spring of hearing Dr. Lloyd-Jones in Westminster Chapel, London, he has been watching for something from the pen of this man. Here is expository preaching of our day at its best.

Introductory chapters furnish a general view and analysis of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole. Chapters three through thirteen give a comprehensive and detailed exposition of the Beatitudes. The remaining seventeen chapters deal in like fashion with the rest of the "Sermon."

The entire discourse of our Lord is seen, not as a code of ethics or morals, but as a description of character. It is as though Christ said, "Because you are what you are, this is how you will live." The idea recurs throughout the volume, that to attempt to force social applications of the Sermon on the Mount to meet modern needs is to misunderstand the whole completely. For example, people will select the matter of "turning the other cheek," isolate it from the Sermon, and denounce all forms of war as unchristian. None of these injunctions may be held up to an individual unless that individual is living in a state of grace. What folly, to imagine a man can make himself a Christian. Everything in the "Sermon," the preacher insists, must be understood in the context of the whole; moreover, the order in which a statement comes is important. "Christ did not say things accidentally."

Lloyd-Jones' approach to the Beatitudes is unique: the first three are concerned with our consciousness of need--poverty of spirit, mourning because of our sinfulness, meek as the result of a true understanding of the nature of self; then comes the statement of the satisfaction of our need--they who hunger shall be filled; from then on we are looking at the consequences of that satisfaction: we are merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers. The first Beatitude is regarded as the key to all that follows: poverty of spirit is the fundamental characteristic of the Christian. The author makes a good case for the necessity of *all* Christians manifesting all these "Blessed" characteristics. He makes clear the distinction between these spiritual qualities as they appear in the Christian, the product of grace alone; and as they appear in the unbeliever, the result of natural temper-

ament or biological inheritance.

This preacher's interpretation of the "Sermon" in the light of contemporary needs is thorough, stimulating, and highly relevant. He who plans to bring a series of sermons on this part of the Scripture can hardly afford to neglect the work of this man, who is spoken of as "the greatest expositor of the Word of God in the English world today."

Since sermons are meant to be heard, the author felt that altering or correcting these for publication would rob them of something vital. The messages are published almost as delivered. (They were taken down in shorthand.) If this reviewer has a criticism it relates to the author's expansive style. Like John Wesley, he treats his subject so exhaustively that little is left to challenge the imagination of the reader. Thought progress is sometimes interrupted to clarify at length a subsidiary idea. The style in parts is repetitious, a feature almost unavoidable in the light of the preacher's theory of sermon publication.

James D. Robertson

The Life and Times of Herod the Great, by Stewart Perowne. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959. 187 pages. $5.50.

This is one of a two-volume series on the Herod family which was first published in England. This first volume deals with Herod the Great and the world in which he lived. The author served in the British governmental service in various parts of the world, including Palestine. Though he is primarily a statesman, his hobby is history and archaeology. The volume concerns itself with that period of Palestinian history beginning with the Greek epoch, followed by the introduction of Roman influence; it takes up Herod's father, and then the career of Herod himself. While the book is primarily a condensation and systemization of evidence already known, the author brings to his subject matter a rather distinctive contribution contrary to the usual picture of Herod given chiefly through Josephus. This monarch is delineated by Perowne as on the whole a good man. He tends to discredit Josephus' portrayal because the latter was written for Roman consumption. He states that Josephus' work is based mostly upon the last ten years of Herod's life, an admittedly dark period. Herod was afflicted

during this last decade by a dread disease which made him melancholy, fearful, and vengeful. Herod, he maintains, was primarily the politician, secondarily the warrior, and thirdly the builder. His treatment is sympathetic on the whole, even finding some justification for Herod's execution of members of his own household, pointing out that the practice was common at the time, and that they must have merited Herod's anger. The king is pictured as more realistic than most men of his time, comparable to the time of Jeremiah, when the prophet recognized that supremacy of Nebuchadnezzar was inevitable and the Jews must come to terms with him; Herod likewise recognized in his day that this was the day of Roman ascendancy and that the welfare of the Jews lay in accepting this situation. Perowne points out that refusal on the part of the nation to accept Herod's appraisal led to fanatical nationalism and the downfall of the Jewish state. He explains that the favor in which Herod was held by the Caesars was due not to his subtlety, but to his fundamental trustworthiness and general competence.

The author feels that Herod's biggest failure was in his understanding of Judaism. Regarded with jealousy and suspicion by his Arab relatives, and little appreciated by the Jews (because he was an Arab), Herod felt that his own fortunes, and those of the Jews, lay with the Roman power. Even here, however, Perowne is more sympathetic than most biographers of Herod, in that he finds in him some genuine religious concern.

The story is told with sufficient attention to detail to hold the interest of the scholar. It is told also with clarity of diction and with enthusiasm to interest the non-specialist. It gives evidence of close research, in a painstaking attempt to get at the truth. The evidence and the appraisals are presented on a matter-of-fact basis and with the judicious handling of data. As such a volume receives circulation, it will be a boon to students of the New Testament. The volume is enriched by well-chosen pictures which add much to the total view of the period dealt with.

George A. Turner

The Master's Indwelling, by Andrew Murray. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1896. 180 pages. $2.50.

After having been out of print for many years the reappearance

of this little gem from the mind and heart of Andrew Murray is like a refreshing breeze from another world. The thirteen chapters of this fine devotional are intellectually stimulating as well as spiritually uplifting. The moral impact of the author's meditation should greatly enrich the world of the present generation.

Howard F. Shipps

Through a Quaker Archway, Horace Mather Lippincott (ed.). New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959. 290 pages. $6.00.

Much which the average person knows concerning the group of people called Quakers or the Society of Friends has come second-hand, or perhaps through more remote hearsay. Professor Emeritus Horace M. Lippincott has brought together a series of essays by which Quakers from all levels of activity speak for themselves, and in some measure at least for all Friends. The list of contributors includes technicians, educators, philanthropists, social workers, artists, farmers, authors, medical men, an ex-president of our nation, and the man who is currently Vice President of the United States.

It is to be expected that chapters proceeding from writers of such varied backgrounds would offer something less than a unified point of view. There are, however, certain unities in the volume, notable among which are: a high regard for the quietistic development within Quakerism; a strongly humanitarian and (in the best sense) humane approach to religious duty; a preference for a non-standardized type of belief, a high estimate of the role of education in the religious community; and a preference for the unconventional in mode of worship.

One is impressed with the frankness of many of the contributors in their recognition of the existence of foibles within such a group of individualists as Quakers have tended to be. This reviewer read with much interest the chapter under title "A Quaker Approach to the Bible" by his esteemed tutor, Henry J. Cadbury. Professor Cadbury here deals in charming frankness with the manner in which early Friends used the Bible in the same way that other evangelical Protestants employed it. Not all will agree with the manner in which he regards the deviation from this use, in fashion nowadays. Most will welcome his

insistence upon study of the Bible as a whole, rather than by the selection of single strands.

It should be pointed out for the sake of the record, that this volume is mainly expressive of the non-evangelical wing of the Society of Friends, and tends to ignore the existence of those sectors of the Society which are known in the states of North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Washington. California, Oklahoma and Texas as "Yearly Meetings of the Friends Church." Numerically, these "Friends Churches" are significant in the light of the total membership of Quakerism, while their contribution to the religious life of the nation, and to the several areas in which their missionary societies operate, is significant.

Allowing for this omission, this collection of essays provides delightful reading, and the several contributors have "something to say." One gets the impression that Quakers have exerted an influence in the affairs of this nation quite out of proportion to their numerical strength. The causes for this are discernible in the contents of the book: the traditional Quaker emphasis upon personal religious discipline, the concern for *inwardness* as against mere adherence to the modes of religious life, the emphasis upon education within the Society, and the intensely practical quality of the mysticism which has characterized the "quiet people called Friends."

Harold B. Kuhn

A New Heaven and A New Earth, by Archibald Hughes. Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958. 233 pp. $3.75.

Contemporary interest in "last things" continues to be productive of significant books on "the blessed hope." An Australian minister, ordained by the Plymouth Brethren but widely used by other denominations, has written this challenging volume. Archibald Hughes has served as a lecturer in Wesleyan Bible College in Melbourne and is currently a regular contributor to Australia's foremost Christian newspaper, *New Life*.

This volume is intended to be an introduction to the study of the Second Advent. It carries the reader from the first Messianic promise in Genesis (3:15) to the believer's eternal

inheritance in the New Heaven and the New Earth, portrayed in Revelation 21. This general survey of the whole subject of prophecy "sets the Second Coming of Christ in its vital connections with Biblical revelation as the consummation of God's eternal plans."

Organized in three parts, the book first presents "the Blessed Hope" as the apostolic age conceived it. That Hope in its Old Testament setting and its New Testament fulfillment constitutes the central emphasis of the work. Taking "the Seed" (the Messiah, Christ) as the key to understanding all of God's great purposes, Mr. Hughes treats in well-ordered discussions these topics: the Seed and the Serpent, the Seed of Abraham and Blessing unto all Nations, the Seed and the Kingdom of God, the Seed of David and His Throne, the Church--the House of Christ and the Habitation of God, the New Humanity, and the Eternal Inheritance.

All is interpreted from the amillennial point of view. For Hughes, the millennium began at Pentecost and will end with Christ's personal, bodily return, at which event the New Heaven and the New Earth will be ushered in. In brief, this Gospel Age is witnessing the fulfillment of all scriptural prophecy ever to be fulfilled this side of eternity. We are now in the last dispensation, the closing age of all time.

In Part II, a series of questions are considered, all intended to clarify the amillennial interpretation of Biblical prophecy and to leave no basis for premillennialism, especially the dispensationalism of the Scofield Bible variety. After handling such issues as Daniel's Seventieth Week, a Pre-tribulation Rapture, the "Two Gospels," the Kingdom that John the Baptist and Jesus offered to the Jews, the Judgment Scene of Matthew 25, and the Millennium, the author in Part III briefly concludes his study with a significant relating of the Christian's Hope to his temporal, social responsibilities.

In presenting his interpretation of Biblical prophecy, Mr. Hughes marshalls and quotes scriptural portions with a skill seldom surpassed by Biblical scholars. Considering the nature of this study, a most commendable feature is the author's prolific use of Scripture in conjunction with his interpretative statements. With the pertinent words of each passage italicized for ready reference the reader can quickly grasp the revelancy of the Scriptures cited.

This volume will doubtless be used by some as a "clincher"

for the amillennial viewpoint and will remain for some time as a challenge to premillenarianism. However, it leaves some things to be desired by way of treatment of those specific prophecies concerning Israel. Here is another example of holding to the "literal" fulfillment of those prophecies concerning Christ's First Coming, but over-spiritualizing predictions pointing to His Second Coming. Mr. Hughes seemingly cannot conceive of both the literal and spiritual possibilities of the Second-Advent prophecies. No serious reading of this book, however, will leave one content with an unreasoned position relative to our Lord's promised Return.

Delbert R. Rose

From Eden to Eternity, by Howard A. Hanke. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960. 196 pages. $3.50.

This book is a sequel to Dr. Hanke's *Christ and the Church in the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1957). It goes beyond the redemptive unity of the Old and New Testaments to a demonstration of the fact that God never has had but one plan of salvation and that it is adequate from creation to eternity.

While this basic idea should be acceptable to all evangelical Christians, every chapter is full of dynamite. The implications cited are often contrary to the accustomed thought patterns of scholars and laymen alike. Here we have the unusual spectacle of a thoroughly evangelical and deeply committed scholar vigorously attacking the "myths" that orthodox theologians have been teaching for centuries.

The first shock to some is the free use of the word "church" from Eden onward. And this is no anachronism. He holds that the church did not begin at Pentecost but at Eden. Prophecy told not of a future Messiah but a present one. The Jehovah of the Old Testament was the Christ. Chronologically precise dispensations are "fanciful." The law was and is perfect and cannot be abolished. Christianity, not Judaism, is the real successor to Pre-Advent Judaism. Modern Judaism is apostate and counterfeit. Sacraments do not change--only the modes (circumcision to baptism). Jesus did not teach a new doctrine or set up a church. He simply fulfilled the old. Moses was a Christian. And it is erroneous to speak of the "Christian

Church" and the "Jewish Church" as though they were two different churches.

Many will disagree with much that is said--at least at first thought. But the book is absorbing and worthy of more than one reading. In the reviewer's opinion, this book is long overdue. He who neglects it does so to his own hurt.

Wilbur T. Dayton

The Later Herods, by Stewart Perowne, Abingdon Press. 1959. 232 pages. $6.50.

It is not easy to make ancient history live. In this second volume on the times of the Herod family, author Perowne has achieved a popularized history which is based on sound scholarship and yet is interesting reading. He is conversant not only with the main primary sources of classical authors, but is also at home with current issues--a fact which gives the book a refreshing relevancy. Almost forty pictures do much to clarify and add interest to the text. Most readers of the New Testament do not have the time or opportunity to become familiar with Josephus and other writers of antiquity, but in this brief compass the author has lifted out the salient points and presented them in an absorbing narrative. His own experience in the British overseas service stands him in good stead as he describes the world under Roman rule. This volume bears on the New Testament history to a greater extent even than does the author's *Herod the Great*. Its careful reading will do much to give a "third dimension" to the reading of the Gospel narratives and the Book of Acts.

George A. Turner

The Clue to Rome, by Reginald Kissack. London: Epworth Press, 1959. 108 pages. 2 maps. 8 shillings 6 pence ($1.20).

"'Can seven sovereign little hill communities sink their individualities and become one really worthwhile city?'"

The answer to this question, says the author of this unusual little book, gave birth to "The Idea of Rome," whose "essence was uniqueness"--an idea which had geographical, imperial,

and religious implications (pp. 20-21).

Around this "Idea of Rome" Kissack builds an historical survey of Rome, always relating the various periods in the history to relevant points of interest which stand in the city today. The chapter headings suggest the movement of the theme: The Idea of Rome "Formulized," "Evangelized," "Christianized," "Ecclesiasticized," "Spiritualized," and "Nationalized." The volume is therefore neither merely a history nor a street-by-street guide-book (although the Epilogue does outline three or four worthwhile tours of Rome): it is a guide to understanding the present city in the light of the past. (Americans may need to be reminded that "Sta" is the abbreviation of "Santa," the Italian feminine form of "Saint."

The book is frankly written for Protestant Christians, but with a positive, not an anti-Roman Catholic, point of view. The author, a British Methodist pastor who lives in Rome, writes with a style which is a delight to read. The book will be valued by those who are interested in Rome, and would be a profitable pocket-companion for visitors to the "Eternal City."

J. Harold Greenlee

Our Contributors

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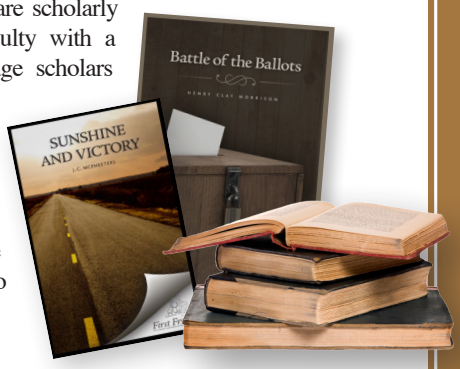

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